EVERY WEEK MARCH 24, 1923

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THE LAUGH IN THE CELLAR

BY Edward Leonard

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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LVI March 24, 1923 No. 4

The Laugh in the Cellar

by Edward Leonard

Author of "The Mark of a Match," "Plotted with Roses," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOVING SHADOW.

"NERVES! That's all—just nerves." In the big, silent room, growing dark now with the approach of night, the girl's sharp whisper of reassurance to herself seemed to stir uncanny echoes. With a little shudder she turned from the window where she had been watching the last gleams of sunset over the hills.

"I couldn't have heard it," she muttered, staring into the shadows of the room. "It's impossible! And yet ——" The trembling words broke off in a startled gasp.

From somewhere below in the cellar came a weird, hysterical laugh. For a moment the girl stood rigid with alarm. Again she tried to assure herself that her imagination was playing tricks with her.

"Nerves! Nerves!" she whispered tensely in an effort to steady herself. "I need a tonic or a change of air or—something. Ugh! What a dreadful place this is in the dark!"

Quickly she stepped to the center table and pulled the switch chain of the big family lamp. A flood of light transformed her from a dim, spectral figure to a pretty, blue-eyed young woman with pale-gold hair. If anything were radically wrong with Effie Galt's nervous system, her appearance failed to betray the fact. A healthy, vigorous, outdoor type of girl she seemed to be, not given to morbid fancies, and yet a stay of

two weeks in this old house at Green's Corners was beginning to have an abnormal effect upon her, a change which might not be apparent to others, but which was very evident to herself. She was losing her calm poise, her self-confidence, her cheerful optimism. When she was alone, slight sounds now startled her, set her pulses jumping. For the first time in her life she had learned to dread the dark. And for the first time in her life she understood what it was to live in the shadow of fear.

From the hall came the sound of soft steps. Presently a faded little woman with anxious, restless eyes stole timidly into the room.

"Did you hear it, Miss Galt?" the woman gasped.

"You—you heard it, too?" the girl cried, her alarm growing now that she was convinced that the laugh had been no delusion. "Mrs. Marlin, what do you make of it? What could it have been? Do you believe there could be somebody—something—down there in the cellar?"

Slowly the little woman came forward until she stood beside the table, face to face with the girl. "Whether it's man or woman or beast, I don't know," she answered hoarsely, "but there's something down there in that cellar, because I saw it."

"You saw it!"

"When that first laugh came, Miss Galt, I was close to the kitchen door in the hallway and not ten feet from the cellar stairs. I stepped into the hall and looked down them stairs. 'It was dark down there, but there was a little light filterin' down from where I stood, and at the bottom of the stairs something crept by. In the dark it was no more'n a shadow, just a movin' shadow, but I could hear the sound of it as it passed along. A queer, crawlin' sound it was. 'Twasn't much like a human bein's steps. And that was enough for me. I didn't look no more."

"But it's impossible!" the girl exclaimed. "How could anybody or any beast get into that cellar except from inside the house?"

Mrs. Marlin gave a perplexed shake of her head. "That's it," she admitted. "It's impossible. The outdoor cellar door's locked and bolted, and the drop doors at the top of the outside steps are bolted, too, on the inside. Nobody ever unlocks 'em. And there isn't a single window down there. I guess they didn't put windows in cellars a hundred years ago when this house was built. Oh, yes, it's impossible, all right; but how about them stories folks tell of the laugh in the cellar? Miss Laura's heard that laugh off and on for years. There's spooks in this house, Miss Galt. That's what folks down in the village have always said, and I'm ready to admit it myself now."

Abruptly she paused and listened. from upstairs was coming the sound of women's voices.

"Aunt Laura's been frightened by that noise we heard," the girl said after they had stood silent for a moment, "and Aunt Susan is trying to reason with her. Poor Aunt Laura! She's probably too scared to come downstairs."

"She's been scared for more'n half a century," Mrs. Marlin returned. "She oughter be gettin' used to it by now. But I'm just startin' to get scared, and I ain't used to it. And I don't like it. I don't take no fancy to the notion of sleepin' to-night above that thing that's down there in the cellar."

To Effie Galt the prospect was equally unpleasant. Her forehead puckered into a little frown at the thought of it. "You really believe there's something down there?" she persisted. "You don't think you could have imagined you saw something?"

Mrs. Marlin raised her dark eyebrows. "Me? I never had no imagination, and I ain't given to seein' things that ain't so. When I see somethin',

it's there. And when I hear somethin', it's there. My eyes and my ears never play no tricks. I can depend on 'em. I might distrust 'em if I was like Miss Laura Galloway, whose nature it is to be scary, and who was born that way. But I'm more like her sister Susan. It takes consider'ble shock to jar either of us."

Glancing through the doorway, Mrs. Marlin caught sight of the two Miss Galloways coming down the stairs.

"Now, Laura," Miss Susan was protesting petulantly, "I'm not going to argue with you any more about ghosts and supernatural visitations and all that sort of nonsense. If you want to believe in things like that, you're at liberty to do so, but at your age you ought to know better. You've heard that noise often enough, or at least you say you have, to know by this time that it must be harmless, so why worry about it?"

"Yes," Miss Laura replied as they came into the sitting room, "but tonight it was more distinct than it ever has been, and more horrible."

They were prim, elderly women in rustling, black silk dresses, their gray hair parted in the middle and drawn flatly into little tight knots at the backs of their heads. Miss Laura's features were weak and insignificant, but her sister's commanding Roman nose, her grim, tight-lipped mouth, and her square chin indicated a forceful character.

"I was just tellin' Miss Galt that I seen that thing in the cellar just now," Mrs. Marlin hastened to inform them.

"Good gracious!" cried Miss Laura, sinking weakly into a chair.

Drawing her lips a little tighter, Miss Susan regarded Mrs. Marlin with a glance of cold and severe suspicion. "Oh, you did?" she said at last in a voice of rasping harshness. "I thought you had too much good sense to be seeing things like that, but it seems not."

"Now see here, Miss Susan," Mrs. Marlin protested resentfully, "I've cooked for this family for three years without ever slippin' any rat poison into their food or tryin' any of the other queer tricks that so many women seem to be up to nowadays, and with that record my word oughter be as good as anybody's."

"Tush!" sneered Miss Susan. "Merely because you've been considerate about rat poison is no reason why I have to believe that you saw that thing in the cellar. You imagined you saw something, of course. But I'm not going to take to believing in spooks just because you think I haven't the right to doubt your story."

"Tell us what you saw," Miss Laura urged gently. "I can believe it. I can believe anything about that cellar."

Mrs. Marlin proceeded to repeat her story. At its conclusion, Miss Susan, sniffing disdainfully, announced that it was high time somebody investigated that cellar. "And I'm going to do it right now," she declared. "It's time I showed you nervous women that nothing is there."

"Susan!" gasped her sister. "Don't! You mustn't!"

Miss Susan ignored the protest. "If everybody's afraid to come with me, I'll go alone," she snapped.

"Well, I'll go, I s'pose," said Mrs. Marlin doubtfully. "We've all got to die some time, and I dunno as it makes much difference when."

"Then get a candle—and stop talking about dying," ordered Miss Susan.

Clinging to her chair, Miss Laura shivered as her elder sister and their niece followed Mrs. Marlin into the kitchen. There Mrs. Marlin lit a candle, with which she led the way to the cellar door. With Miss Galloway beside her, and followed closely by Effie, she crept slowly and timorously down the stairs.

In the flickering light of the candle their shadows loomed spectrally against the glaring, whitewashed walls. It was

a huge place, extending under the whole house. Like many old-time cellars, the floor was of hard-packed earth, on which their feet moved noiselessly.

"Like the catacombs of Rome," Effie remarked with an effort to screw up her courage as she glanced at the wide arches which, rising from heavy pillars, supported the roof.

"I don't know nothin' about catty-combs," declared Mrs. Marlin in a sepulchral whisper, "but it's the last place in the world I'd chose to die in. I wish we were out of it."

A few feet from the foot of the stairs stood the furnace, and a little way beyond that were the coal bins. In a far corner was a great pile of boxes, broken furniture, and odds and ends of refuse. Immediately in front of the furnace hung an electric light globe, which Miss Galloway made haste to turn on. Electricity in the house had been installed in the days before switches were in common use. Opening the door of the furnace, cold and empty now, for the summer was well advanced, she poked her prying nose inside. Perched on the top of a box, which Mrs. Marlin dragged out for her, she investigated the coal bins. She was not satisfied until she had peered into every possible place of concealment the cellar contained. After inspecting every shadowy nook and corner, she snapped off the electric light and turned triumphantly to Mrs. Marlin, who, candle in hand, was still glancing anxiously about.

"Well, it's just as I knew it would be," Miss Susan declared. "There's nothing here. Now perhaps you'll be satisfied."

"Listen!" Mrs. Marlin whispered suddenly. "I heard something."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the old lady.

"But I did, I tell you!" Mrs. Marlin's voice sank into a frightened gasp, then rose in a shrill scream. "Look! There! There!"

Across the floor near the farther end of the cellar something black was creeping, something so indistinct that it might have been no more than a shadow. Then it slowly moved close against the whitewashed wall. Mrs. Marlin screamed again. The candle slipped from her shaking hands, fell with a thud upon the earthern floor, and the women found themselves in darkness.

"Oh, I can't stand this!" cried Effie as she felt her way toward the stairs, where dim light was glimmering from the hall above. Her aunt and Mrs. Marlin were pressing close behind her. As the girl stumbled against the first step, there came from the far end of the cellar, where the shadowy thing had crept against the wall, a wailing cry, distinct and unmistakable. For an instant the icy grip of terror held her spellbound while the cry ran into a strange, crackling laugh.

Suddenly the voice of her aunt, shrill with alarm, recalled her to her senses. "Effie, get up those stairs at once!" cried Miss Galloway.

With the two women crowding close behind her, the girl staggered forward and with a gasp of relief plunged into the lighted hallway above.

"Thank Heaven," she heard her aunt exclaiming unsteadily, "we are out of that diabolical place! There surely is something down there, Mrs. Marlin. But what is it? What is it?"

Too breathless for words, Mrs. Marlin closed the cellar door behind her with a bang and locked it.

CHAPTER II.

JUST BEFORE DAWN.

IN the sitting room, where she had been left alone because of her more adventurous sister's determination to investigate the lower regions, Miss Laura Galloway, unnerved by the commotion below, sprang up from her chair at the sound of some one entering the house from the front.

As she had supposed, it proved to be her brother, David. A brisk, alert little man was David Galloway, with small, restless, gray eyes and a weak, boyish face that contrasted oddly with his white hair. He was by several years the youngest of the family, and he looked it.

"Well, what's the trouble now?" he demanded, staring with a frown of irritation at his sister, whose panicky condition was clearly apparent. "Seems like every time I go away for a day something goes wrong. What's up?"

Unexpectedly, the answer came from his sister Susan, who had just returned through the hall with her niece and Mrs. Marlin. "It's a pity you couldn't have got home earlier," she snapped at him. "Poking round in that cellar is a man's work, not a woman's."

His brusque manner softened perceptibly. He was a little afraid of his sister Susan. "Poking round in the cellar?" he echoed. "Why, what——"

"It was that awful noise again," Miss Laura explained. "It was more dreadful than ever."

"Oh, that. Huh! There never was a noise there except in Laura's imagination. And I don't see why the whole house has got to be stirred up every time she thinks she hears something."

"But to-night Mrs. Marlin saw something down there, David," said Miss Laura.

"Saw something!" Galloway turned to Mrs. Marlin with a sneer. "What did you see, your shadow?"

"No, I didn't see my shadow," came the ironic reply. "Me and my shadow have lived together long enough to know each other, I guess. If I knew what it was I saw, I might be satisfied; but it was something, all right. It could move, and it had a voice; and I heard it crawl. And if you want to find out whether it was beast or human or spook, you can go down there and poke around like we've been doin'."

Galloway dropped into a chair and regarded the women with a bewildered stare. "Well, I'll be derned!" and he sighed. "I thought it was enough to have one woman talking this ghost poppycock, and now it looks like the whole lot of 'em have gone crazy."

The next moment he repented his words as he saw his sister Susan advancing upon him menacingly. "Now see here, David Galloway," she said icily as she pointed a finger at his nose, "if any folks have gone crazy in this house, I'm not one of them. I certainly heard something down there, and I've half a mind that I saw something, even if it was nothing more than the shadow of a rat or a cat—though goodness knows we've never had rats in this house nor cats, either. If you think you have the only level head in the family, suppose you go right downstairs and see if you can't find out what's wrong, instead of sitting here making yourself disagreeable."

"All right," he said. "I'll go. Right now."

"But not alone, David," Miss Laura pleaded.

"Oh, tush! I don't want you women tagging along after me. I ought to know that cellar well enough to find my own way round it."

Grumbling to himself he left the room while the womenfolk, nervous and apprehensive, fell silent. They heard the opening of the cellar door, then the sound of his steps on the stairs.

After a few tense moments Miss Laura gave a stifled sob. "I wish he hadn't gone alone," she moaned.

For a time nothing more was said. Effie Galt stirred restlessly. The gloomy room, the three silent, faded women, the suspense, rasped her nerves. Softly, she moved to a window, cupped her eyes with her hands, and looked into the night. The stars were out, shining on lonely fields and hillsides. A quarter of a mile away the lights of the village twinkled

back at them. With a little shiver she drew back from the glass. She had grown to hate the still, country nights—to dread them. She longed for the clamorous voice of the city, for its crowds, its glaring lights. Desperately she tried to reason away her fears, but there was no escape from the conviction that it had been a human voice which had come to her ears from the depths of the cellar that night.

At last she heard the slamming of a door, and her uncle's steps coming through the hall brought relief to her. A look of disgust was on Galloway's face as he appeared in the doorway.

"Women's nerves!" he said with a sneer. "I've been through that cellar from end to end. There's no place big enough for a lady bug to hide in that I haven't stuck my nose into. I've even pried into that rubbish pile. I've tried the outside door. Nobody could get in there unless he used an ax. There's nothing there, I tell you—absolutely nothing there. And hereafter I'm through with this nonsense."

Sulkily he seated himself in a chair beside the lamp, picked up the newspaper he had brought home with him, and proceeded to ignore his irritating household while he glanced over the headlines. Mrs. Martin stole back to the kitchen, the Misses Galloway brought out their knitting, Effie searched the bookcases for something to read, and quiet reigned again for a time.

In time Galloway seemed to have worked himself into a more sociable mood. "That cousin of ours has certainly got his mystery as well as we," he remarked. "Listen to this." He read the newspaper:

"Colonel Charles V. Barlow said to-day that there is still no clew to the thief who stole his wife's diamond necklace from her bedroom last week. Colonel Barlow believes the theft was committed by a second-story man, who crept into his wife's room from the roof of the porch while the family were at dinner. Several robberies of this kind have occurred in Millsburg recently. The police believe a band of New York crooks have been at work here and in neighboring towns."

Colonel Barlow, the Galloway's cousin, was the wealthiest man in Millsburg, the big town ten miles from Green's Corners. It was in Millsburg that Galloway had been spending the day.

"Did you see Charlie or any of the family?" Miss Susan inquired.

"Nope. Didn't have time to get around to the house. Haven't seen 'em since last week."

"It's fortunate that necklace was insured," Miss Laura remarked. "A $100,000 necklace! Good gracious! I think that's altogether too extravagant, even though the Barlows are rolling in money."

With a yawn Galloway laid down the paper. "Talking about crooks," he said, "do you remember Lamar, the man that all Boston was talking about ten years ago? The man who was supposed to have killed Hoffman, the big banker, and two or three other people, when he robbed their bank? Well, I saw him to-day. You remember, I saw him when he was on trial in Boston, and I've got a long memory for faces. He hasn't changed much, either. Passed him on the street in Millsburg."

"But why isn't he in prison?" asked Effie.

"Had a clever lawyer. Managed to wriggle out of the murder charges and got only a short sentence for robbery. His time was up long ago. Don't suppose those Millsburg police would know him if they saw him."

"But why don't you tell Cousin Charlie you saw him?" said Miss Laura. "Perhaps he's the man who stole the necklace."

"Pooh! If he'd stolen that necklace, he wouldn't be hanging round Millsburg now. He's too clever. That necklace thief is a long way off by this time."

"Well, do let's talk of something else beside such things," Miss Laura sug-

gested. "I want to try to think of pleasanter subjects, for if I don't I won't sleep a wink to-night. How can I keep from being frightened after what has happened? We're all frightened, I'm sure—all but you, David. And you would be, too, if you had come home a little earlier."

"Now you've started again about that thing in the cellar," her brother grumbled. "I knew you couldn't keep away from that old topic very long. Give us a rest, Laura. I'm sick of it."

Silence fell again. At last the old grandfather clock in the hall struck ten. As the last bell echoed away, the Miss Galloways, true to lifelong custom, stuffed their knitting into their workbaskets, rose, and said good-night to their brother.

"Bedtime, Effie," Miss Susan announced, for apparently her niece, oblivious of the hour, was absorbed in a book.

"Yes, auntie."

The girl started to rise, but dropped back into the chair with a quick catch of her breath, her eyes wide with sudden fear. Resounding through the cellar came again that strange, wailing cry, ending as before in hideous laughter.

Galloway sprang to his feet. "Go-good Lord!" he stammered. "Have I gone crazy, too?"

For a moment he stood rigid, listening. But the cry did not come again. The only sounds that reached his straining ears were the slow, solemn ticking of the hall clock and a little gust of wind rustling the open shutters of the windows. Apprehensively he glanced around the room, then glared stupidly at his sisters. Again he heard the rustling of the shutters. In his bewildered mental groping for a clew to the preposterous riddle, the rising wind suggested an idea. The wind must have found something to play upon to cause the sound that had so amazingly resembled a human voice. That was it, of course. He tried to assure himself that he had found the explanation. And yet the theory failed to satisfy him. The more he pondered the idea, the more absurd it seemed that such a sound, so distinct, so varied, so startlingly human, could have been produced by the wind through any possible combination of circumstances.

His sister Susan broke in upon his abstraction. "Well, David," she taunted him, "perhaps you are convinced now. I hope that after this you won't be quite so ready to accuse everybody but yourself of having gone crazy."

"I'll admit it did sound like a human voice," he rejoined. "It was as much like a woman's as like a man's. It might have been either one or the other, except that it couldn't have been either. Use your sense, Susan. You know there couldn't be anybody down there. I'm going outdoors to look around."

"But it couldn't have come from outside," she reasoned. "We heard it plainly enough. It came right from the cellar. You know that as well as I do."

Her brother insisted, however, on going outside and searching the grounds. Presently he returned, as much puzzled as ever. He explained that outside there could be no hiding place for any prowler in the bright starlight; no trees, no hollows; only bare fields and a white, dusty road. Neither a human being nor a beast could have got away without having been seen by him.

"It's no use hunting, David," wailed Miss Laura. "We're not going to find out what it was because it's something supernatural. We might just as well all go to bed now and try to forget it, though I'm sure I won't forget it. Come on, Susan."

The two sisters and their niece passed out into the hall and crept timidly up the stairs. A little later Mrs. Marlin put out the light in the kitchen and retired by the back way to her room one flight up in the wing of the house. Al-

though she was on the same floor with the rest of the family, a great deal of distance separated their rooms from hers. She was in the outside end of the wing, while they were all in the opposite end of the main building. It was a big house for one servant, but the Miss Galloways had always helped with the dusting and the cleaning and the making of beds, and Mrs. Marlin did not find her work especially difficult. She was almost like one of the family and did just about as she pleased.

In her big room directly over the entrance hall that night Effie Galt crept into her century-old four-poster with considerable misgiving. Indeed, there had scarcely been a night since her arrival at Green's Corners that she had been wholly free from vague, disturbing apprehensions. It was only natural that the big, gloomy, dismal old house, its lonely surroundings, and her elderly, uninteresting uncle and aunts would have a depressing effect upon such a girl, who had been accustomed to a much more cheerful and stimulating environment. The change had not been of her own choosing. Circumstances—the illness of her mother, now in a sanitarium, and a business trip by her father to Europe—had forced it upon her. Their home in Boston was closed, and here she was in the care of relations whom she found extremely uncongenial.

On her very first night in this house it had seemed to her that there was something uncanny about it that rasped her nerves and stirred unaccountable fears. Even to herself she could not then have explained the cause of her forebodings. But through some of those psychic faculties that are latent in us all she had felt, hovering oppressively around her and pervading the whole house, a mysterious, indescribable something, an evil influence, that filled her with a haunting sense of tragedy and dread.

Perhaps it was the gruesome history of the place that had something to do with her state of mind. Old Reuben Galloway, who built the house more than a century ago, had killed himself there. Years later another Galloway, Reuben's nephew and heir, Roger, had been found murdered in the family sitting room. That crime had remained an unsolved mystery, though presumably it was the result of an encounter with a burglar. It was this unfortunate Roger Galloway, who, belonging to a period when everybody read Dickens as the latest literary sensation, called the place "Bleak House." The name fitted it and stuck. It was as Bleak House that it had been known to the villagers ever since. Bleak it surely was, with its grim, bare stone walls, rising in forbidding isolation from a barren hillside. There was neither lawn nor garden. Generations of Galloways had seemingly been content with their cheerless situation and had made no attempt to relieve its nakedness. A long stone's throw to the north were woods of pine and hemlock, where sometimes the wind made a whistling sound like the rubbing of silk. In the opposite direction lay the sleepy little village. Green's Corners had long ago been eclipsed by its fast-growing neighbor, Millsburg, and had lost ambition.

For a long time Effie lay listening to the sighing of the wind. Sleep seemed impossible. Her experience with the thing in the cellar had been too recent, too nerve-wracking. She could not get it out of her mind. She could not shake off the dread that above the voice of the wind would come again that wailing cry and cackling laughter. She heard her uncle pass her door, feeling his way uncertainly through the dark toward his room. By and by she fell asleep. When she awoke, it was raining heavily, and there was still no sign of dawn. Before long the thunderous roar of the rain on the roof lulled her to sleep again.

It was with a start that she came back to consciousness. She sat up, staring wide-eyed at the black windows. The roar of the rain had stopped, but the splashing of water from the eaves seemed unnaturally loud in the quiet of the night. But some sharper sound than that had startled her from sleep. She was sure of it. To her overwrought imagination the dying echoes of a hideous cry still seemed to be ringing faintly through the room.

"I know I heard it!" she muttered.

Slipping from the bed, she stepped to the door and stood listening with straining nerves. The hall clock began to strike—one, two, three, four. As the last note died away a piercing cry rang through the house, followed after a moment by the sound of quick, heavy steps upon the hard, bare cellar stairs.

With an unreasoning impulse stirred by terror, Effie pulled open the door and ran through the hall to the room of her uncle. His door stood open, but her shrill call to him brought no answer. She peered inside. The room was empty.

"David!" came the high-pitched voice of her Aunt Susan from farther down the hall.

"He's not here!" cried Effie. "I've been looking for him."

Her aunt emerged like a specter out of the dark. "Not here?" she echoed. "Then he must have gone downstairs to discover what that noise meant. Here comes Mrs. Marlin. We'll all go down—all except your Aunt Laura, who's scared too stiff to move. Mrs. Marlin, what did you hear?"

"It—it sounded to me like Mr. Galloway's voice," stammered the woman, who was far from showing the courage of Miss Susan. "I heard just one cry, and then I jumped out of bed."

"I heard more than that," Miss Susan declared. "Some one ran either up or down the cellar stairs."

They groped their way down to the lower hall, where Mrs. Marlin snapped on the electric light at the foot of the stairs, disclosing herself wrapped in a quilt and Miss Galloway in a flaring red wrapper. Effie, her pale-gold hair hanging in a heavy braid, her face white and drawn with fear, had forgotten that she was still clad only in her nightdress, and that her feet were bare. For a moment they stood there listening, but there was not a sound but the ticking of the clock and the dripping of the water from the eaves.

"Strange!" muttered Miss Susan. "Where can my brother have gone? If he were in the cellar we could surely hear him moving about. Well, the only thing to be done is to go down there and see for ourselves."

Mrs. Marlin gasped. "I'm afraid, Miss Susan," she admitted. "And I don't think we oughter go down there. We don't know what we might find. We better wait for Mr. Galloway to turn up, or else telephone to the village for somebody."

Into Miss Susan's face came a look of grim determination as, ignoring Mrs. Marlin's pleas, she moved toward the kitchen. Mrs. Marlin and Effie trailed reluctantly after her. As they came to the rear hall, they discovered that the door to the cellar stairs was open. In the depths below was nothing but impenetrable blackness.

"Now I wish you wouldn't," Mrs. Marlin persisted as Miss Susan turned on the kitchen light and demanded a candle. "I ain't any more afraid to die than you are, not one bit; but somehow I've got a creepy feelin' that tells me that things ain't right down below there."

"I'll soon find out whether things are right down there or not," snapped Miss Galloway. Discovering the candle on a shelf, she reached for it, struck a match which she found in its tray, and lit the wick. "Now come on. Or stay here if

you want to, both of you. I don't care what you do."

Effie caught her breath. The thought of going down into that mysterious, menacing darkness chilled her like the touch of an icy hand. But her aunt's courage was an inspiration to her. "I'm twenty-one years old," she told herself, "and I'm as scary as a silly child. If poor old Aunt Susan isn't afraid of that place, I ought not to be."

Together the three moved toward the open cellar door. The dim candle light fell upon the stairs, crept slowly farther and farther as they descended, stirred ghostly shadows on the cellar floor and on the whitewashed walls.

Suddenly, Effie clutched at her aunt's arm. "Oh, please don't go any farther!" she pleaded. "There's something there—something there on the floor at the foot of the stairs."

At the same moment Mrs. Marlin screamed. "It's Mr. Galloway!" she cried. "Mr. Galloway—dead!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MARK OF A CLAW.

IN the gray dawn, Sam Whitlock, constable of Green's Corners, guided his car up to the grim stone house on the hill, to which he had been summoned over the telephone by Miss Susan Galloway. The place looked even gloomier and more forbidding than usual. Behind the big, fortresslike building, which more resembled a prison than a family home, the sky was inky black with the receding storm. Several downstairs windows glowed with yellow light, which cut long, shimmering paths through the white mist that shrouded the ground.

"Spooky as ever," muttered the constable as he climbed out of his car and stared at the gray walls. It was the first time in many years that he had been so close to the Galloway house. He recalled that when he was a boy he had been afraid of the place. That was when Roger Galloway was alive. He remembered old Roger well, a big, bluff man, a leader in village affairs, capable and successful in business, who had left what in those days was considered a large fortune to his son and three daughters. There was not much left of that fortune now. David Galloway's share had dwindled away, and he had managed also to lose a great deal of his two unmarried sisters' inheritance. Miss Susan had taken firm control of affairs in time to save the remnants.

But the constable was in too much of a hurry to get more definite information than he had received over the wire, to reflect on these matters more than a moment. In answer to his ring, Mrs. Marlin admitted him and led the way to the sitting room. There he found Miss Susan and her pretty niece.

"How did it happen?" he began abruptly.

Rising stiffly from her chair, Miss Susan regarded him coldly for a moment. She had known him when he was a boy and could recall a time when with unerring aim he had smashed an egg against the sitting-room window as he passed by in his father's wagon. His ability to cast any light on the mystery of her brother's death she regarded as dubious. "If you can find that out, Sam, you'll be a clever man," she replied. "We found him lying at the foot of the cellar stairs. That's about all I can tell you."

"But, auntie, you can tell him what we heard," said Effie. "The cry, and the sound of steps on the stairs, and all that horrible experience before he came home."

Miss Susan shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, I suppose we might as well tell him," she agreed, "though I don't know what good it will do. He won't be able to understand it any more than we were."

"And I don't believe anybody will

ever understand it," added Mrs. Marlin, who had been standing in the doorway listening. "This house is full o' spooks. That's all I've got to say."

Constable Whitlock pulled at his heavy, sandy mustache reflectively. He had heard all the stories that were told about the Galloway house and could understand the woman's theory of ghostly visitors. He himself had believed ghosts were there when he was a boy. "Let's have the whole story, Miss Susan," he urged, "though of course you can't expect me to believe that spooks had anything to do with this. You're a sensible, practical woman. You don't believe such tommyrot, either."

"Of course I don't," she declared sharply. "There must be some reasonable explanation for all these goings-on. But it's too deep for me, and I'm sure you'll never find it, either, Sam, unless you're a lot wiser than you used to be. Now listen, and I'll tell you the whole story."

It was a story that left the constable a great deal more puzzled than he had been before, and that brought an expression of frank bewilderment into his round, ruddy face. "It don't sound possible," was his obvious comment as he squinted his eyes at Miss Susan. "Mind if I go down into the cellar now? It's time I was getting busy."

"I can't go there again," Miss Susan said with a little shudder. "Mrs. Marlin will show you the way."

Though day was breaking, the windowless cellar was still pitchy dark as Mrs. Marlin, candle in hand, led Whitlock down the stairs.

"He's there," she whispered hoarsely, pointing to the dim form that lay below them. "I don't like to look at him, but I s'pose I got to."

They drew nearer, until the light disclosed clearly the body of David Galloway lying on its back on the earth floor. The flickering flame of the candle gave a ghastly illumination to the waxy-gray face, which, with half-open eyes and sneering mouth, seemed to leer at them.

"Ugh!" the woman gasped, drawing back. "Look at his neck. There's something there—under the ear."

Whitlock bent low. "I should say there was!" he exclaimed. "That's where he was struck. This wasn't no accidental death, and it wasn't no suicide, and—Good Lord!" He jerked himself erect and stared blankly at the woman. "Why, it's the mark of a claw!" he exclaimed.

The candle shook in Mrs. Marlin's quivering hand. "A claw!" she cried in a shrill whisper. "That's what it is. I can see it now. No human bein' done this. It was a beast of some sort. That's what we heard. And that's what we saw—a beast! We better get out o' here."

Again the constable bent over the body. Just below the ear were three almost parallel scratches, deepening into gashes that had cut into the arteries of the neck. As he straightened up he stared through the cellar, where uncanny shadows were flickering over the white walls.

"I guess I'll look around," he said at last with a sigh.

"You better not," Mrs. Marlin whispered. "It ain't safe."

Ignoring the warning, he began to make a close inspection of the place, while the woman followed reluctantly after him. His search was, if anything, more thorough than Miss Susan's had been, and it proved equally futile.

"It's too much for me," he admitted, shaking his head. "I've been up against many a queer proposition, but never anything like this. That outside door's locked and bolted, there ain't any windows, there isn't a single place where anything could hide. What's the answer?" He turned out the palms of his hands and looked at her with raised eyebrows as if to indicate that it was a problem beyond anybody's power to

solve. For a moment he stood pondering the matter.

Suddenly his body stiffened, and he drew back in alarm as from somewhere in the far, shadowy spaces there rang out a wailing, human cry. It was human if Whitlock could trust his ears. No beast he had ever heard had had such a cry.

Close behind him the woman began to whimper. "I can't stand this no longer," she sobbed. "I'm goin'."

"Wait!" Whitlock growled at her. "If there's anything over there, it'll get me first. You needn't worry."

He stepped forward, intent on making one more inspection of the place from which the cry had seemed to come.

"You've got your nerve with you, all right," Mrs. Marlin whined admiringly. Sam Whitlock might have his failings, bot nobody had ever questioned his courage. It would take a great deal more than a mere voice, he now told himself, to swerve him from the path of duty.

But this second search turned out to be as unproductive as the other, and at last he was ready to follow the woman up the stairs. At the kitchen door he left her and returned to the sitting room. In his absence Miss Laura had come from upstairs and was giving a pitiable exhibition of terror. Effie seemed to be making a brave effort to control her own agitation, but her Aunt Susan was as grim and firm and unperturbed as ever. The constable regarded this indomitable old lady with a thrill of admiration.

"Miss Galloway, you're a wonder!" he exclaimed. "All this business has been enough to scare any woman, but you're facing it like a man."

"Well, Sam, I never could see how it helped anybody to get scared," she returned. "And as for that cry just now, I've heard it before, and I'm getting used to it. What did you find out, Sam, about my brother?"

Whitlock glanced at Miss Laura and hesitated.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid to tell us," Miss Susan prompted him. "Laura couldn't be any more scared than she is now, but if she doesn't want to hear anything unpleasant she can leave the room."

"I don't dare leave the room," sobbed the younger Miss Galloway. "And I don't care what I hear. It couldn't be any worse than I've heard already."

For a moment the constable considered how he could tactfully divulge what he had discovered, but he was not artful enough to hit upon a way of softening his news. "Your brother was murdered," he said bluntly. "That's plain enough. He was struck by something that cut his neck open. If it wasn't so impossible, I'd say he was struck by the claw of a beast. But it's beyond reason that any animal big enough to kill him like that could have got in down there."

"And it's almost as much beyond reason that a man could have got in there, isn't it?" Miss Susan argued.

Whitlock considered. "Well, I dunno," he replied slowly. "I suppose it's just possible that a man could have got in there. Come to think of it, were the doors and all the windows locked on this floor?"

"I know they were," Miss Susan returned decidedly. "I lock the windows and the back door myself every evening at sundown. The front door has a spring lock, so it isn't necessary to bother about it; but my brother always took the precaution to put the chain on before he went to bed."

"No windows unlocked upstairs?"

"Only in the rooms where we sleep. And there isn't any porch except the small one in the back. The only windows over that are in my niece's room. Her room is the only one anybody could get into except by a ladder or a rope."

"Then I'm derned if I know how any-

body got in," said Whitlock. "But somebody was in. Perhaps if we can't find out how he got in we can find out how he got out. Was the chain on the front door after this thing happened?"

"Yes, it was. I asked Mrs. Marlin to go and see before you came."

"Huh! And the back door was still locked, and the windows?"

"They're all locked, Sam. You see, I did some thinking myself before you got here."

"Then I dunno how he got out, either," said the constable with a discouraged sigh. "Or how it got out, or whatever the thing was that killed him. So far as I know, there haven't been any dangerous beasts loose around these parts for something like a hundred years."

The constable turned to Effie, who suddenly had leaned eagerly forward in her chair, apparently with some suggestion on the tip of her tongue. "But, Mr. Whitlock," said the girl, "animals escape from circuses sometimes. I read in the newspapers once of a leopard that got out of its cage and wandered over the country and killed a farmer. Good gracious! If there's some such beast in this house, it might be hiding almost anywhere—under a sofa or a bed."

"Susan!" cried Miss Laura. "I think we all ought to get out of this house at once. I know Effie's found the explanation. How can there be any other?"

"Oh, do be quiet," her sister returned. "You're not helping matters any by trying to frighten everybody." She turned to Whitlock. "You say you found something like the mark of a claw, Sam?"

After an apprehensive glance at Miss Laura, the constable nodded an affirmative. "Something like it. In fact, I've been trying to puzzle out how anything else could have made such marks—three long scratches, and they went pretty deep. But I don't believe you need worry about an animal being in the house. It isn't possible. He couldn't have got in."

"And he couldn't have got out!" screamed Miss Laura. "If he was here, he's here now."

"There was a circus over in Millsburg last week," Whitlock volunteered, "but I didn't hear of any animal escaping from it. If one had got away, the papers would have been full of it. I heard once of a gorilla climbing into a house through a window, but he couldn't have got in here that way unless he went up the porch and through your niece's room."

Effie gave a little gasp. "But couldn't he have got through my room?" she said fearfully. "I was asleep, and something wakened me before I heard the cry. Oh! It just makes my blood run cold, the idea of a gorilla or something like that going through my room while I was sleeping."

It occurred to Whitlock that the more he talked the more he added to the fears of the women. He knew he had never been very strong on tact. "It looks like I've found out about all that you ladies can tell me," he said, running his blunt fingers through his thick, sandy hair, "and I guess I'd better be calling up the coroner over at Millsburg. He'll report this case to Ed Carney, the detective in the county prosecutor's office. Ed's pretty clever, and if he can't get to the bottom of this business. I guess nobody can. I'll go and use that telephone in the hall if you don't mind."

While the constable was at the telephone, Mrs. Marlin came softly into the sitting room. For the first time Effie noticed how worn and anxious the little woman looked. In a few hours she seemed to have aged years. "All these goings-on have got my nerves so unstrung," Mrs. Marlin announced, "that I guess I'll trolley into Millsburg to-day and see a picture show. I got to do somethin' to get my mind off of this trouble or I'll be a ravin' lunatic."

"All right," Miss Susan agreed. "You can go whenever you want to. We can get lunch ourselves."

Mrs. Marlin returned to the kitchen. The sound of Whitlock's voice as he spoke into the telephone came harshly from the hall. He was detailing to the coroner the circumstances, so far as he knew them, concerning Galloway's death. Presently he came back into the room. He was no more than through the doorway when from the cellar came a loud, reverberating crash.

Joining the echoes of the sudden commotion came an hysterical scream from Miss Laura. Mrs. Marlin ran in from the kitchen wringing her hands and whimpering. "It's that thing again!" she cried. "I heard it crawling. And then it must have knocked over something."

CHAPTER IV.

A LIVE WIRE.

ANOTHER close search of the cellar by the constable left him as bewildered as before. As nearly as he could judge, everything down there was in precisely the some position as on his former inspections. Nothing that he could find suggested a clew to the cause of the crashing sound that had startled the household. He was growing a bit dazed by the perplexity of the problem, and he made no further effort to evolve theories. It might be just possible, he had thought, that an animal was hiding in the house, but he didn't want the women to think so. They were altogether too much frightened already—all but Miss Susan.

"This is too much of a job for me," he admitted at last to the Miss Galloways. "Ed Carney's the only man for it. I'll bet he'll puzzle it out sooner or later. Ed's a live wire."

"I hope he has some brains," returned Miss Susan. "Lots of live wires never seem to get anywhere."

"He's got a brain like a dynamo," the constable declared. "I'd like to see the man who could fool Ed."

About an hour later, the highly recommended Carney arrived in company with a stout, pompous man in spectacles, whom he introduced as Coroner Bauer. Carney himself was a striking contrast to the coroner in appearance. He might have a dynamic brain, as the constable had averred, but he looked commonplace—a wiry, lean, alert little man with a small, narrowed head, a little wisp of a dark mustache, and dark, straight hair carefully parted on the side and plastered down very smoothly against his scalp and waved over his low forehead with a wet brush. He wore a green suit, a pink tie, and sharply pointed, patent-leather shoes with pearl-gray uppers. At first he was a disappointment to Effie, and she saw her Aunt Susan glaring at him dubiously.

At once the three men went into the cellar. A good half hour elapsed before they returned. The coroner wanted to talk to the Miss Galloways about the removal of the body, and while he was with them in the sitting room Carney discovered Effie in the hall.

"Just a moment, Miss Galt," he said and stepped up to her quickly. "I want to ask a few questions. So far as you know, did your uncle ever have any quarrels with his sisters?"

"Why, I don't think so," she replied. "If he did, I never heard of them. But what in the world do you mean by such a question? I don't understand." It was now not only the county detective's appearance that impressed her unfavorably, but his tone, his manner, and the bluntness of his unpleasant inquiry as well.

"I guess there's a lot of things you don't understand about what's been going on here," he returned. "I don't want to make any insinuations or ask any more disagreeable questions than're necessary, but it's my business to find out just how things have been standing.

Know of anybody your uncle's had trouble with? Ever hear him talk of having trouble with anybody?"

"I never heard that he had an enemy. But I've heard him talk with my aunts of money troubles. He was never very successful in business matters. I think he had been rather hard pressed for money lately."

"Uh-huh. I see. Been trying to borrow money from his sisters?"

Effie flushed indignantly. "I don't think I ought to answer such a question," she replied sharply.

Carney was not a sensitive person, and he was accustomed to being snubbed. In his prying inquisitiveness, rebuffs never disturbed his self-assurance in the slightest degree. That is one of the reasons why the county prosecutor's office had learned to prize his services. "Now don't get offended," he said. "This is all in the line of business with me. I've got to find out things, even if I do have to step on folks' toes sometimes. It's a lot better to speak right out and tell all you know than to get subpœnaed and be made to talk. In a case like this, when anybody won't answer questions it rouses suspicion. It makes a man like me say 'There's something here that's being covered up.' And then he gets busy trying to find out what it is."

"But I don't see how my uncle's money troubles could have anything to do with his death," Effie protested. "I'll tell you all I know if you insist, but I don't see what good it's going to do. I don't know very much to tell, either. I don't know whether he tried to borrow any money, but if he did try I'm quite sure they didn't let him have it. Money slipped through his fingers so fast that it wasn't safe to trust him with any, and of course my Aunt Susan knew it."

"I see. And he was always on good terms with your aunts, even though they wouldn't let him have any money? It don't seem likely."

With his thumbs in his trousers pockets, Carney gazed abstractedly at the ceiling. "Oh, well," he said at last, "we'll let that matter rest. Now about this Mrs.—what's her name?—Marlin. I understand she went to Millsburg just before I got here. How long's she been with the family?"

"About three years."

"Where'd she come from?"

"Why, her husband died in some little town up the State, and she had to go to work. This is the first place she has had, I think."

"What kind of a woman is she?" Carney persisted doggedly. "Got nerves and a lively imagination, I suppose. The kind that's apt to imagine she sees things and hears things?"

"She didn't have to imagine she heard that thing in the cellar. I heard it myself. We all heard it. And I don't believe she's the kind that imagines things. She seems to me like a reliable, practical, hard-headed woman. My aunts have a very good opinion of her."

"Well, now, Whitlock's been telling me all about those sounds in the cellar, and, considering he heard 'em himself, I'm kind of curious. When did you hear the first one?"

"Last evening when I was alone in the sitting room. At first it was a wild sort of cry, and then it turned into a laugh. That was the first time I was sure I heard it, but once or twice before it seemed to me that I did. My Aunt Laura had often heard it before."

"Yes, I know. Because your aunt had heard it or thought she had heard it, you imagined you could hear it sometimes. Mental suggestion, or something like that, is what they call it."

For a moment Carney studied the girl out of the corners of his eyes. Annoyed by the bold impertinence of his scrutiny, she turned angrily away.

"Now wait a minute," he pleaded. "Unless there's something you're trying to keep me from getting wise to,

you ought not to mind a few questions. You never had any trouble with your uncle yourself?"

At this Effie rebelled. "See here, Mr. Carney," she exclaimed in quick resentment, "you're behaving as if I and everybody in this house were under suspicion."

"In a case like this," he retorted, "everybody's under suspicion till they've proved 'emselves innocent. It don't look like anybody could have got into the house from outside, and yet somebody did kill Dave Galloway. So what's the answer? Unless we can find out that somebody could get in, it'll sort of look like he was killed by somebody who didn't have to get in, won't it? If this was a movie show, I might figure on trapdoors and tunnels and things like that. But I've been over every inch of that cellar. It's got nothing but stone walls and earth floor. The worst picture detective in the game would never be crazy enough to look for a trapdoor or a tunnel down there. I know Sam Whitlock's got the notion that some kind of a wild animal did the job, but I don't believe it. The jungles are too far away. I'm looking for a human being."

Whitlock, who had been prowling about in the cellar again, now appeared in the hall, and Effie, abruptly turning her back on the persistent inquisitor from Millsburg, hastened toward him.

"Mr. Whitlock, do keep that awful man away from me," she pleaded. "He's positively insulting."

The constable turned the tail of an eye toward the narrow back of the county detective, who had gone into the sitting room, where, after interrupting the coroner, he was beginning to question the Miss Galloways. "Oh, you mustn't mind Ed," he said lightly with a conciliatory smile. "He means all right. It takes a little while to get used to his ways, that's all. Folks get sore at Ed sometimes because he never stops to think whether his questions are going to offend 'em. He's got such a thirst for facts that he asks every question that comes into his head. A lot of 'em may not be necessary, but that brain of his gets to going at such a full head of steam that he don't stop to sort 'em."

They could hear Carney's voice with its unpleasant, nasal twang as he put question after question to the Miss Galloways.

Whitlock moved closer to the doorway of the room. "Just listen to him," he whispered admiringly. "Ed can ask more questions! He could keep that pace up all day if he wanted to."

"I hope he doesn't," and Effie sighed petulantly. "I'm getting very tired of this Mr. Carney. And I can't see that all his disagreeable questions are getting him anywhere."

"Now about that cry and that laugh," Carney was saying. He paused an instant as he caught sight of the constable. "How did they sound to you, Sam—like a man's voice or a woman's?"

Whitlock shook his head. "That's hard to say, Ed. It was a shrill voice, and it might have been either male or female."

"It wasn't a human voice at all," interposed Miss Laura. "It was either a ghost's or a beast's. Some wild animals have a cry that sounds like a laugh. There's the laughing hyena, for instance."

Carney made a gesture of annoyance. 'I'm not going to bother about that wild-animal theory—at any rate, not yet," he returned sharply. "And I'm not going to bother about that spook theory at all. S'pose I went back to my boss and told him a ghost did this job. He'd throw me through the window or lock me up as a nut, and I guess I'd be getting what I deserved. I've heard this haunted-house stuff before in lots of cases, and it never turned out to be anything but bunk. P'raps there were ghosts a hundred years ago, but modern life don't

agree with 'em. They've all gone back to their graves.

"No, ma'am, if you and Sam and the rest of you really heard that voice and didn't imagine it—and I'm ready to admit that Sam's got a livelier imagination than I have—you can bet your last dollar that it was no spook's. So we won't talk about that any more. Now let's see. It looks to me like whoever did this job chose his time pretty carefully, for, with that heavy rain last night making all the noise it did, he could have got down into the cellar without much chance of being heard. And if it was somebody from outside, it couldn't have been a better time to break into a house. But the rain stopped a little too soon for him, and, with no noise except the dripping of water from the roof, making his get-away must have been a good deal harder. I can't see yet how that get-away was made. The constable's been searching round the house and didn't find any rope or ladder, or any clew like that. But that can wait. Now about Dave Galloway. I always knew a little about him myself, but not much. I'd like to know a whole lot more. Never married, was he?"

"He was not," Miss Susan replied curtly.

"H'm. Must have been fifty—fifty-five years old."

"Fifty-two," Miss Susan informed him promptly. "He was the youngest of the family."

Into the detective's lean face crept the faintest of smiles. "Kind of unusual," he remarked, "for a man to go that long without falling for some woman."

Stiffening erect in her chair, Miss Susan glowered at him fiercely. "It seems to me, young man," she returned tartly, "that you are going out of your way to inquire into matters that don't happen to be any of your business."

As unperturbed as ever, Carney squinted at her. The retort seemed to stir suspicion in him. Obviously, here was a line of inquiry that Miss Susan preferred to have closed at once, and always when he found his questions annoying he felt that he was getting near to something worth finding out. "Never had a love affair?" he persisted callously. "Never engaged to anybody?"

Miss Susan pursed her thin lips and remained severely silent. It was her sister who answered the question. "Yes, he was," she said quickly, "and I think we might just as well admit it, even though it wasn't an engagement that we could be proud of. He was going to marry a woman named Cora Langdon, or at least he wanted to. I'm not sure what would have happened if he had lived, because he didn't have money enough to marry on."

Carney's little eyes lit up with eagerness. "Cora Langdon," he muttered. "Seems to me I've heard that name." Apparently searching his memory, he stared at the ceiling. "Well, I can't place her now," he added after a moment, bringing his gaze back to Miss Laura. "Who is she?"

"I don't know any more about her than you do," was the reply, "except that she looks and talks like a very undesirable person. I can't imagine what my brother was thinking about when he asked her to marry him. She's handsome, yes, in her coarse way; but at his age one might have expected him to consider something more than the shape of a woman's features or figure."

Carney sniffed. "The older they grow, the less sense they show about women," he observed cynically. "What was the matter with this one?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Miss Susan. "What wasn't the matter with her? The smell of her cheap perfumery isn't out of the house yet. She was covered with paint and powder, and I think her hair was bleached. If it wasn't, it was a most unusual shade of

yellow. And her conversation was not what could be called refined."

This was information much to Carney's liking. He smiled cheerfully as he gloated over it. "So he brought her here, did he?"

"Once, to introduce her to us," Miss Susan replied severely. "I'm glad it was only once."

"And you don't know anything about her? Where she came from? Who her folks are?"

"Nothing, except that she says she's a widow from New York, and that my brother told us some man introduced him to her in a restaurant," said Miss Laura. "She's staying in Millsburg at a very second-rate place called Regan's Hotel."

"And now that the story has been told, I shall ask you to drop that woman from the conversation," Miss Susan added decidedly with a hard look at Carney and the coroner. "She's not a very pleasant topic."

Bauer, who had been quietly absorbing information with an eye to the inquest, rose impatiently from the couch where he had been sitting, explained that he wished to use the telephone, and left the room. Presently Carney seemed to conclude that enough questions had been asked for the time being, and he, too, went into the hall, brushing against Whitlock on his way out. The two men drew off into a corner. Carney's eyes were glistening with excitement.

"Well, Sam," he said, rubbing his hands together, "I'm getting somewhere at last."

"Perhaps," returned the constable skeptically. "You've dug up some derned interesting information, but how it's getting you anywhere is too much for me. How can you figure that that Langdon woman had anything to do with this job? And you're a long ways off from being able to explain that voice in the cellar. It's all just as foggy as ever to me, Ed."

At this reminder of the problem of the voice, the county detective winced. "I'll admit, Sam, that if you really heard anything in that cellar it's a mighty curious proposition," he returned, "but I've dug up something to work on, and I've got a feeling that I'm on a hot trail. In a case like this, always look for the skeleton in the closet. There's pretty sure to be one. I've found the skeleton."

Carney's gaze wandered abstractedly to the floor. "Cora Langdon!" he muttered. "Cora Langdon. Where have I heard that name before? Huh! Well, I guess it'll come to me pretty soon."

CHAPTER V.

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.

ON a still, moonlit evening, a little after nine o'clock, a few hours after David Galloway's funeral, Sam Whitlock called again at the gloomy stone house on the hill in response to an urgent telephone message from Miss Laura. It was Mrs. Marlin who answered his ring at the door, and who led him to the sitting room, where he found the two sisters and their niece.

The constable could not have failed to observe the worn, anxious look in Mrs. Marlin's thin, sallow face. In less than three days the woman seemed to have aged perceptibly and indefinably. Miss Laura, too, was showing signs of nerve strain. Her faded eyes were heavy, restless. The little, white, blue-veined hands, busy as usual with knitting, trembled over the needles. Her sister, apparently, was much less perturbed, and with their pretty niece the vigor of youth had been proof against the shocks of fear and tragedy. It was a relief to the constable in such a dismal setting to see the girl's flushed face, her blue eyes and golden hair, as she sat with a book in her lap in the glow of the big lamp—such a contrast to the big, bleak room with its dreary Victorian furni-

ture and the prim, drab, gray-haired women. The family had just passed through another nerve-trying experience, but there had been time to recover somewhat from its effects before Whitlock's arrival, and they were now making an effort to take up their usual evening diversions of knitting and reading.

"It was that thing in the cellar again, Sam," Miss Susan explained. "The same cry, the same horrible laugh."

"Again!" Whitlock exclaimed. "It don't seem possible."

"I don't know how possible it is, but it happened all the same," returned Miss Susan, "and I think it's about time you men managed to find out something about it. In spite of all you've said about his wonderful brain, your unpleasant friend, Mr. Carney, hasn't been able to discover anything yet, though goodness knows he's been making himself disagreeable enough. He was here yesterday and again to-day with a million questions, and he's been poking about in the cellar and upstairs looking under beds and into closets and scrambling about on the roof. It seems that if there were even a mouse in this house, he must have found it, but he hasn't found even that."

"I dunno how Ed is as a mouser," the constable returned, "but he's a live wire, all right. He'll be right on this job till he does find something; you can bet on that." He dropped heavily into a chair and stared in perplexity at Miss Susan. "You sure you heard it—the same cry?"

"But somehow it wasn't exactly the same," Effie interposed quickly. "At least, it didn't seem to me that it was. And it was more of a laugh than a cry—one long, hideous laugh. Ugh! I can hear it yet."

"Where were you when you heard it?" asked Whitlock.

"Here in the sitting room," Effie replied. "All of us—Mrs. Marlin, too. It was just after dark, and Mrs. Marlin was saying something to Aunt Susan when—— Good gracious! How dreadful it sounded. It just seemed to send chills all through me. It was so horribly human, so——"

With a gasp she started from her chair as a shrill sound rang through the house. "Oh! It's only the doorbell," she exclaimed and sighed in relief.

They could hear Mrs. Marlin shuffling through the hall, and presently a man's voice sounded as the front door was opened.

"It's Ed Carney," Whitlock explained. "I telephoned for him when I got your call."

"Good land!" cried Miss Susan. "Have we got to endure that man again? He'll drive me to distraction. I suppose I might reconcile myself to him if he were only of some use, but I know what this visit will be; the same thing; questions, questions, questions—and that's all. I wish——"

It was Carney himself who interrupted her. "Somebody been dreaming again?" came his nasal voice as he stepped briskly into the room. "I understand there's been another scare from the cellar. Funny, I'm the only person who hasn't heard that thing. I guess I haven't got enough imagination to hear spooks."

Miss Susan sat stiffly erect, pursing her lips, her cold gray eyes threatening. "I don't believe you have, young man," she remarked sourly, "and I am beginning to fear that is not all that you lack. If there is anything in your head at all, it seems to me it is time you were showing some results after your endless questions."

Upon Carney the thrust had no visible effect. Ignoring it, he turned to Whitlock. "I can't see what good it does to keep searching that cellar, Sam," he said, "and I don't know as I feel like bothering about it again. It's been done often enough, and I don't take much stock in that noise down there. I

wouldn't have run out here to-night except that I sort of want to go over things again and clear up some little points. I understand Mrs. Langdon didn't even take the trouble to go to the funeral. Kind of queer, wasn't it, considering she was engaged to marry him? Has she telephoned, written, or shown up here?"

"We haven't seen her or heard from her," Miss Laura answered. "She must be a very strange woman."

"Strikes me that way," Carney continued. "She must have heard of what happened. The papers are full of it."

"Perhaps she has been away," Effie suggested.

"Oh, no, she hasn't. I've been keeping tabs on her. She's right there in Millsburg. I've been asking her some questions. And she's a hard proposition to stack up against, I can tell you that. Couldn't get much out of her. But we'll forget her for a while."

Stepping briskly to a far corner, he paused to inspect a curious Indian cabinet, the only attractive piece of furniture in the room. It was a heavy antique about five feet in height. Instead of having legs, it was supported at each corner by four tiny wooden elephants. It stood within a few inches of the rear door of the room, with its back to the wall. Its teakwood front and sides were elaborately carved and inlaid with curious ivory figures of East Indian mythology. Evidently it was very old, and the hand of time had not been easy with it. It was scratched and scarred, and in some places the wood had cracked.

"That thing caught my eye the other day," said Carney, satisfied with his scrutiny of the cabinet and moving to the center of the room, "and I've been wondering—it don't seem to jibe with the rest of the furniture. Not exactly the kind of thing that's often seen hereabouts. How'd it get here?"

Putting down her knitting, Miss Susan scowled at him fiercely. "I suppose I ought to be willing to answer any questions that are in your line of business," she returned petulantly, "but when it comes to satisfying your idle curiosity, I object."

"But he may have some good reason for asking the question," her sister interposed. "You can never tell what's in the minds of these detectives."

"There's not very much in the mind of this one," Miss Susan retorted. "I suppose it's easier to tell him than to put up with his persistence. My brother brought it with him from India, young man, if you must know."

"From India?" Carney echoed. "When was he in India, and why?"

"It was four or five years ago," Miss Laura explained. "He went there with some idea of going into the importing business. He was there almost a year, and this cabinet was given to him by his friend, a Mr. Paul Goddard, a man he knew in Bombay. He and this Mr. Goddard were thinking of going into business together, but the plan fell through somehow. I think it was because David couldn't raise enough money."

"H'm. Goddard. Bombay. An American?"

"I'm not sure," returned Miss Laura. "American or English. But he has spent most of his life in India. He was the closest friend David ever had. David helped to nurse him through one of those horrible Indian fevers, and the man has felt grateful to him ever since. They kept up the friendship with letters after David returned to this country, and only very recently Mr. Goddard wrote that he was coming to America and would pay us a visit here. About a month ago we heard from him that he wouldn't be able to come, after all."

Carney seemed to be interested. "So his closest friend's in India," he muttered. "What kind of a man is this Goddard? Know anything about him?"

"We've never seen him," Miss Laura

answered. "We don't know any more than what David has told us, and that isn't very much. They were about the same age, I believe, but whether he was tall or short or thin or fat is more than I can say. We know scarcely anything about him but his name."

"I believe he was a bachelor," said Miss Susan, "but I'm not even sure of that. David was never very communicative."

With a wave of his hand Carney dismissed the subject. "I guess he's too far away to bother with," he concluded. "Sam, I guess we might as well take another look around that cellar. It'll make the ladies less nervous if they know there's nothing down there."

Going into the kitchen, the two men got a candle from Mrs. Marlin and disappeared down the stairs on their search. Before long they were back in the sitting room with the oft-told story. There was certainly nothing bigger than a mouse alive in the cellar. There couldn't be. They had gone over every foot of it.

"And that's the last time I'm going to bother about prowling around down there on such a fool search," Carney added with a yawn. He turned to Mrs. Marlin, who had come in through the rear door to hear the result of their investigation, for instead of returning to the kitchen with the candle they had left it in the hall. "Did you hear that voice to-night, too?" he asked.

"Why, of course I heard it," she replied. "How could I help it? It rang all through the house, and——"

Suddenly, she gave a violent start, for, breaking in upon her words and rising through the great, dismal house in horrible reverberations, had come from the depths of the cellar a human laugh.

"Good Lord!" cried Whitlock. His face had turned ashen.

Again came that hideous peal of laughter. "Ha, ha, ha! Ah, ha, ha, ha!"

Following this wild outburst, and less distinct, came something like a low growl, then silence—a silence in which even the proverbial dropping of a pin might have raised an echo.

For a long moment Carney stood as rigid as a statue. His sharp, thin face was a curious study in bewilderment. Vacantly he stared at Whitlock. "I don't know, Sam," he said at last. "This is beyond me. Spooks aren't in my line. If there's anything down there in that cellar, it can't be found. But for sureety's sake, we'd better have still another look. But you ladies ought to be getting used to that sound by this time. I guess you'd all better go to bed and forget it. That's my advice. Come on, Sam."

Again they took the candle and made the search; again they found nothing but the ordinary contents of the cellar.

Upstairs, Carney shrugged his shoulders and shivered. "Wow! I never heard anything that sent chills up my spine like that before. Sam, let's get out of here. I've got a feeling that the bright lights of Main Street, Millsburg, would be good company just now."

It was several hours later in the night that Effie Galt was lying in her bed wide awake, staring with quivering nerves at the dim, oblong glow of the moonlit window. She wondered what had wakened her. So far as she knew, she had heard nothing, and yet she could not rid herself of a fear-inspiring feeling that something uncanny had startled her from heavy sleep.

Over the white walls of the room the moon was casting sharp shadows. There was dead silence. Outside not a breath of wind was stirring. A bat came twittering past the window, then silence again. And then——

She sprang out of bed. It was no ghostly laugh that was ringing in her ears now, but a woman's cry of terror.

For a moment she stood helpless in the grip of fear.

The cry was not repeated. She could hear nothing now, until there came the banging of a door and the rush of feet through the hall. Then at last, in a panic of desperation, she ran out of the room and caught a glimpse of her Aunt Susan going down the stairs.

"Mrs. Marlin!" her aunt called shrilly. "Are you down there?"

"No, but I'm coming," came a shaking voice, and, emerging out of the dark from the direction of her room, Mrs. Marlin, joined on the way by Effie, followed Miss Susan Galloway down the stairs.

"What was it? What was it?" Mrs. Marlin whimpered. "I heard an awful cry. It sounded like a cry for help."

"It sounded to me like my sister's voice," replied Miss Susan grimly as she made a light in the downstairs hall. "It seemed to come from somewhere near the kitchen. But if it was Laura, I can't understand how she could have dared to go down there alone."

If Miss Susan were afraid she gave no sign of it. Courageously she moved toward the rear hallway, until Mrs. Marlin caught at her arm and held her.

"Don't go back there!" the trembling woman pleaded hysterically. "I've got a feeling that there's something dreadful back there."

"All the same, I'm going," said Miss Susan, shaking herself loose and pushing the door that led into the dark hallway.

As the door swung open, an inexplicable, inner sense suddenly thrilled Effie with the conviction that Mrs. Marlin was right, that the hallway was not empty, that indeed, as the woman had said, something dreadful was ahead of them there in the dark.

"Auntie!" came the girl's frightened whisper. "Please don't! There's something that I can't see or hear, and yet somehow I know it's there."

Ignoring the warning, her aunt moved forward, groping for the hallway lamp. Presently, she found it and lit it. Followed by Mrs. Marlin and Effie, she came to the turn at the top of the cellar stairs.

Suddenly, with a sharp catch of her breath, she drew back. Before her on the floor, close to the open stairway door, lay the lifeless body of Miss Laura Galloway.

For a moment, Miss Susan stood with clenched hands and tight-set lips staring at the body. Wrapped in a gray dressing gown, it lay face downward, arms outstretched, the rigid hands clutching at the bare floor. Miss Susan shuddered, choked back a sob, and turned slowly, with wild, bewildered eyes, to her niece, who, with her face buried in her hands, was crying with little, convulsive gasps.

"Come away!" pleaded Mrs. Marlin weakly. "It's no sight for either of you. And listen!" Her voice dropped to a panicky whisper. "I thought I heard—down below there in the dark—something moving."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GLEAM THROUGH THE WALL.

WHATEVER the sound may have been that Mrs. Marlin declared she heard from the cellar a moment after the discovery of Miss Laura Galloway's death, there remained no more tangible evidence than before that any living thing had been there. If Miss Laura had been killed by an intruder, there were certainly no marks of violence on the body. This fact led Coroner Bauer to declare that she had died from fright, or, as he expressed it, from the effects of a sudden shock upon a weak heart; and such was the verdict of his jury. But nobody seemed able to offer an explanation as to how, timid woman that she was, she had come to be alone at the top of the cellar stairs at such an hour of the night.

People in Green's Corners showed a singular lack of feeling over the old lady's death. Neither she nor her brother had been popular with them. They had considered her as rather a selfish little woman, at times irritable and quick-tempered, fond of ill-natured gossip, and with an uncharitable spirit for the frailties or misfortunes of others. But they were sorry for her sister. They admired Miss Susan's fine, sturdy character, and they could tell of many little incidents to illustrate that she possessed quick sympathies and a kind heart.

Among these villagers was a general feeling that Miss Susan ought to remain no longer in the ghostly house on the hill; that, until the mystery of the thing in the cellar was cleared up and the deaths of her brother and sister could be explained satisfactorily, it was a dangerous place for her. Her wealthy cousin in Millsburg, Colonel Barlow, held the same view of the matter and was not slow in urging her to move. Not only did she owe an immediate change to some other home to herself, he argued, but to her niece. They were both in danger alone in that house of horrors. There could be no telling when the thing from the cellar, or whatever it was that had killed David Galloway and that, perhaps, had killed his sister, would strike again.

But Miss Susan was deaf to persuasion and warnings. To be driven from her home of a lifetime by fear, she regarded as rank cowardice. She had been born in that house; she intended to spend the rest of her life there. She told Colonel Barlow that she considered it high time that the timorous, superstitious folks of the village, who now shunned the place as never before, were given an example of an old woman's courage and of her contempt for their timidity. As for Effie, she could go somewhere else if she wanted to—to a hotel, to a boarding house, to Colonel Barlow's, if he should invite her. Effie, however, in spite of her own fears, realized that it was clearly her duty to remain with her aunt if Miss Susan insisted on staying there. The old lady could not be left alone with only Mrs. Marlin as a protector. In case of danger, Mrs. Marlin was altogether too timid, too nervous and excitable, to be a reliable companion.

Mrs. Marlin herself begged Miss Susan to move out at once. "I'm scared half to death of the place," she declared. "I dunno as I can stand it much longer. I can't sleep nights. And I can't see how you or your niece can, either, for that matter."

Miss Susan was as stubborn as ever. Nobody was going to scare her out of her own home

"Well, all right," Mrs. Marlin concluded with a sigh of resignation. "I know I oughter stay if you do. I couldn't leave you in the lurch at such a time as this."

In a theory firmly maintained by Ed Carney two or three hours after the discovery of Miss Laura's death, all three found some consolation, even Miss Susan, who was beginning to lose her dislike and distrust of the man.

"There's been only one murder in this house," he reasoned, "and I'm ready to bet there isn't going to be another. Miss Laura died from fright. She saw something or imagined she saw something. Her imagination was pretty good, and I guess it was that that did the trick. She'd been troubled with a weak heart for years. It was only her brother that was attacked. Whoever killed him must have had a reason for doing so and, after putting him out of the way, must have been satisfied. The chances are a milion to one that he don't want to kill anybody else unless he's a maniac. If he's sane, he's doing his level best just now to keep from getting caught, so there ought not to be anything to fear from him."

"But how d'you know he isn't a ma

niac?" Mrs. Marlin broke in. "That's just what I think he must be—either that or a wild animal. You don't want to forget the mark of a claw you found on Mr. Galloway."

"You'd have to show me the marks of a good many claws before I'd be ready to take any stock in that wild-animal bunk," Carney returned. "And even then I wouldn't believe it. Use your sense. You know there was no way any beast could have got into this house or have got out. And you can bet that if it had been roaming round the country here, somebody'd have seen it. And as for the lunatic—well, where's he gone? He must have been a pretty wild lunatic, and he couldn't have roamed round the country here either without being spotted. Maniacs don't look like ordinary folks. The wild look in their eyes gives 'em away if nothing else does. I'll admit I did think for a little while that the job might have been done by somebody who'd escaped from an asylum, but I've given up that notion. Of course, it isn't impossible, and I may be wrong; but if it was a lunatic he's probably a long ways from here by this time. There's no place for him to hide in the house, and strangers don't hang round Green's Corners very long without being noticed."

"Well, I hope you're right," and Mrs. Marlin sighed. "It's a kind of a comfortin' argument, anyhow. But there's that voice in the cellar."

Carney shrugged his shoulders. He couldn't explain the voice from the cellar. He was tired of thinking about it.

On this occasion he did not remain very long, though Sam Whitlock hung around the house for a good part of the day. But early in the evening Carney was back again and proceeded to make Miss Susan miserable with a flood of questions about her brother's affair with Cora Langdon. It was little that she could tell him beyond what he had heard already.

"Sure your brother didn't know anything about Mrs. Langdon's past?" he persisted.

"If he did," she replied, "he never told us. But she certainly looked to me like a woman with a past, and a lurid one."

For a fleeting moment an ironic smile twisted the detective's lips. "I guess you're right," he said. "She had a mighty spotty past. I've discovered it."

Miss Susan raised her eyebrows in mild surprise. "Then I'm sure David could have known nothing of it," she declared with firm conviction. "He wasn't a fool. To be sure, he didn't show much sense in this case, but he had never had much experience with women. He was a bachelor getting past middle age, who had never gone about much socially. It wasn't so surprising that he wasn't able to pick the right kind. At his age, a man seldom seems to show much judgment in selecting a wife. But he certainly wasn't crazy enough to marry a woman whose reputation he knew to be bad."

"Well, I'm not so sure about that. These old fellers—how they do fall! There was that eighty-year-old lawyer in Millsburg who married the eighteen-year-old manicurist. After the first week she skipped out with his roll and eloped with a kid."

The prim old lady winced. "David's 'roll,' as you call it, wouldn't have amounted to very much," she observed. "I suppose that woman merely thought he must have money. He belonged to an old family and was rather fond of posing as a man of means. And she had probably heard that the Galloway estate was a large one, as it was years ago. But I can't see where these questions are leading you. What difference does it make whether this Langdon woman's character is good or bad? How is it going to help you to solve the problem of who killed my brother?"

"Miss Galloway, that's too big a prob-

lem for anybody to solve all at once. It's got to be done by slow degrees. Shooting off a lot of hot air about maniacs and spooks and wild animals isn't going to get anybody anywhere. I've got to work with facts, and I've got to scrape up those facts a few at a time by slow, hard work, and then piece 'em together the way they happen to fit. Facts have been mighty scarce in this case. It was the same as if I was up against a stone wall, and it didn't look like I could get a step further. And then through that wall came a gleam of light, and I could see the hole to work at."

He was silent for a few seconds, squinting across the room at the old, inlaid, teakwood cabinet. "D'you see what I mean, Miss Galloway?" he continued. "No, I guess you don't. I mean I'd come across Cora Langdon's past. I mean I'd discovered that she was caught with a bunch of crooks in New York last spring and saved herself by turning State's evidence. I mean that this same Cora Langdon was away from Regan's Hotel all night on the night that Dave Galloway was killed."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN FROM BOMBAY.

RATHER late on a still, hot evening Effie Galt returned to the Galloway house from an after-supper walk through the hills. As she had taken a key to the front door with her, she did not find it necessary to ring. Turning the spring lock, she stepped inside. The hall was dark, but light streamed cheerfully from the sitting room, and she surmised that her aunt must be sitting there alone. The girl pulled off her broad-brimmed hat of white straw, tossed it carelessly on a stand, shook the dust from her skirts, and hastened in to where she expected to find Miss Galloway bending over her knitting.

With a little gasp she drew back. It was not Miss Galloway who was sitting there, but a man. He was as still and rigid as if he had been carved out of stone, his hands on his knees, his eyes fixed in an unwavering stare in front of him. His expressionless, inscrutable face might have reminded one of a sphinx. A handsome man he was, of uncertain age, with strong, clean-cut features, dark eyes, and black hair flecked with gray. She had never seen him before and had not the remotest idea of who he could be. There was something fear-inspiring in his almost unnatural, cold inertness, and for an instant she was startled by a wild idea that this silent stranger might have some connection with the mystery of the cellar.

From the tail of an eye he studied the girl for a moment, then rose stiffly and bowed. "You are not—one of the Miss Galloways?" he said with a little hesitation.

Effie drew a little closer to the doorway and surveyed him doubtfully. "I'm Miss Galt," she told him. "Miss Galloway's niece."

"Oh, I see. The woman who let me in has taken my card to Miss Susan Galloway. It was from the same woman that I have just heard the shocking news of the death of her brother and sister. It was a good deal of a blow to me. David Galloway was one of my best friends. Possibly you have heard of me. I'm Paul Goddard, from Bombay."

"Mr. Goddard!" At once Effie's confidence returned. "Of course I have heard of you. You wrote that you were coming to visit here, and then, I believe, my uncle heard from you that you would be unable to come."

"Yes. And then very suddenly I discovered that I should be able to make the trip to America, after all. I sailed the very next day, so you can understand why I didn't write again."

From the hall came the sound of rustling silk, and the next moment Miss Galloway swept into the room. She re-

ceived the stranger graciously, and, after he had given a few commonplace expressions of his distress and sympathy, she proceeded to tell him of the two tragedies that had brought her into mourning.

"I had heard absolutely nothing of all this until I arrived at the house," he declared. "Of course I should have sent word from New York of my arrival, but somehow I didn't. In fact, I had counted on giving David a surprise. To tell the truth, I brought my traveling bag with me, with the idea of staying several days, since I had had a standing invitation from you and your brother to visit at your home if I should ever be in America. My trunk is somewhere on the way here now. But—of course I could not expect now——"

He hesitated, with a touch of embarrassment. Miss Galloway hastened to reassure him. "Why, of course you must stay!" she exclaimed. "I couldn't think of turning you away. And goodness knows with all this mystery and danger that seems to be here, we need a man in the house. I am afraid you will find it a dreary place, and that you will be glad to get away; but you must at least remain for the night, and longer if you will."

"That is very kind of you, I am sure," the man replied. "I could go into Millsburg, I suppose, and find some hotel, but I'd much prefer to accept your invitation."

Choosing an armchair beside the center table, he seated himself where the lamplight fell across his handsome, pallid, curiously impassive face, and where it stirred the ruby in his scarf into a speck of angry, flickering flame. From the couch she was sharing with her aunt, Effie studied him thoughtfully. He was faultlessly dressed in the thinnest of summer attire. From a slender, gold watchchain hung a little ivory elephant, a constant reminder of the country he hailed from. The flaring red stone in his tie fascinated her. She had always been intensely fond of rubies. But her attention was not held very long by either his clothes or his jewelry. It was his face that absorbed her interest. The strong, straight, thin-lipped mouth, the square jaw, the cold, unwavering, dark eyes, were impressive. And yet she was not sure that she liked that face. It was too harsh, too unfeeling. In its inscrutability it was too much like a mask. Somehow it stirred in her a vague sense of distrust and suspicion, and for a moment she felt a touch of the dread that had come over her at first sight of him.

The conversation turned to the tragic fate of David Galloway and his sister. Prompted by an occasional question from the visitor, Miss Susan, assisted now and then by Effie, gradually disclosed all the strange features of the story.

"Curious," the man observed, "that after looking forward for years to this visit I should have happened here at such a time. And to think that if I had arrived less than a week earlier I should have found David Galloway alive! I wanted to come last winter, for I yearned for a sharp, invigorating change from the hot Indian climate. I had pictured your brother and myself seated in front of a cheerful wood fire talking together of old times."

He glanced regretfully at the open fireplace, where, behind the big brass andirons, a mass of flowering shrubs had been banked to conceal its bleak emptiness. For a time he remained silent, fumbling the dangling ivory elephant.

"I don't seem to be able to get my mind away from the astonishing account you have given me of the sounds from the cellar," he remarked at last. "It reminds me of some of the weird mysteries we sometimes hear of India. You have no theories about them—no explanation at all?"

Miss Susan shook her head. "Even the detective who has been investigating the case hasn't been able to offer the vaguest guess about them," she replied. "You are sure you are not going to be afraid to remain in such a ghostly place?"

The stranger smiled faintly. "I don't seem to have any sense of fear yet," he answered ironically; "but I can't help being intensely interested. What a puzzle! I'm not very much use even as a guesser at such things. My mind seems to lack ingenuity. If I had any gifts at solving riddles, I might apply it to that mysterious cellar, but such things are not in my line. And I don't particularly care for cellars."

"So far as anybody's eyes can discover, there is nothing unusual or interesting about ours," said Miss Galloway. "The detective, the coroner, and the constable have all been over it several times and haven't found anything out of the ordinary."

Slowly the visitor's gaze wandered around the room, fastening suddenly upon the teakwood cabinet. "Ah! There's that old relic," he observed. "I remember it well." He walked over to it and examined the inlaid front closely. "It was a good deal battered and time-worn before it left India, and it seems to have suffered somewhat more on the journey. Either that or the change of climate doesn't agree with it. These old woods warp and crack sometimes when taken to colder countries."

Presently he returned to his chair, and soon the conversation shifted to other matters. Before long Mrs. Marlin came in and annouced that she was ready to show Mr. Goddard the room where he was to spend the night. With a muttered apology, he stepped into the hall, picked up his traveling bag, which Effie had failed to notice in the dark, and followed the woman upstairs. It was not long before he was back. Looking at his watch, he observed that it was growing late.

"I am afraid it is my bedtime," Miss Galloway remarked as she lay aside the knitting which she never spent an evening without. "And your's, too, Effie."

The ladies took their leave, and their guest, after rising and bowing, sank again into the chair beside the lamp.

In the upstairs hall Effie turned anxiously to her aunt. "Are you sure you haven't made a mistake," she asked, "in inviting that man to stay here? Somehow, there's something about him that——"

"Oh, tush!" Miss Galloway exclaimed impatiently. "He's my brother's best friend. Of course he must be all right. And why shouldn't I have invited him to stay? Your imagination is playing tricks with you."

"Perhaps it is," Effie admitted slowly with a little shrug of her shoulders. "This house and the dreadful things that have happened in it must have been getting on my nerves. It surely doesn't seem as if Uncle David would have invited him here if there had been anything wrong with him. But——"

"But what?" snapped Miss Galloway.

"Oh, I don't know. I can't explain the feeling I have. I'm all unstrung tonight. I'm afraid—honestly, I'm afraid, auntie."

Miss Galloway gave a searching look at her niece's white, anxious face. "I understand, child," she said kindly, drawing the girl to her in a soft embrace. "Nerves. Just nerves. I see now that I ought not to have allowed you to remain here after all that's happened. Come into my room and talk for a while, and perhaps you'll feel better."

It was perhaps half an hour later that Mrs. Marlin tiptoed softly up the back stairs, shuffled through the long hall that led from the wing through the main building, and knocked at Miss Galloway's door. Inside she found the

old lady and Effie, neither of whom had started to undress.

"It's that man—that man from Bombay," the woman stammered.

"Well, what about him?" Miss Galloway demanded sharply.

"I don't know what it is about him. That's what bothers me. But he gives me the creeps. I don't like his face. And I was watchin' him from the hall just now, and he was pokin' about there in the sittin' room as if he was lookin' for somethin'. And he wasn't pokin' about like no innocent man, either. He must have heard me move or breathe, I guess, for he gives a start like I'd scared him, and comes sneakin' to the door and peers out. It was dark there, so he couldn't see me. There's something wrong about him, Miss Galloway."

"Something wrong?" echoed the old lady. "Nonsense. It's impossible. He and my brother were bosom friends in Bombay."

With a shiver Mrs. Marlin glanced behind her down the dark hall as if in dread of what she might discover there. "In Bombay," she muttered. Again she glanced down the hall. Suddenly, with a little convulsive start, she cried out: "Miss Galloway, how do you know he's the man from Bombay?"

CHAPTER VIII.

PROWLERS IN THE DARK.

IT was with a sigh of relief that Effie welcomed the clear, morning sunshine streaming in at her windows. She had spent a restless night struggling to get the man from Bombay out of her thoughts. Her instinctive dread of him had been rendered all the keener by Mrs. Marlin's fears, and by the woman's suggestion that perhaps he was not Paul Goddard, after all. This theory, however, the girl had dismissed from her mind as absurd, but she had not been able to convince herself that the man was above suspicion. She knew it was useless to argue the matter further with her aunt. Miss Galloway, once she had made up her mind to anything, was beyond persuasion. The old lady believed implicitly in her guest, and that settled the matter.

When at last Effie came downstairs to breakfast, she found the guest waiting in the hall just outside the door of the dining room. He had risen early and had been wandering about outside the house, he told her, and felt elated by the fresh morning air. They passed into the dining room, where Miss Galloway soon joined them at breakfast. Not once did the man refer to the gruesome topics of the night before. For the time being they seemed to have passed from his mind completely. Instead, he spoke of the beauty of the New England scenery and of various shrubs and trees he had observed on his prebreakfast ramble. He seemed to know a great deal about trees and was able to tell more about those of that part of the country than even Miss Galloway herself had ever heard. After a time the conversation turned to India, and he related several stories of his adventures there. He was a good talker, and he told them well. To Effie they were of absorbing interest. Before breakfast was over she had formed a sort of liking for their guest and had almost forgotten her distrust of him.

An hour later he left the house to take the trolley to Millsburg, where, he explained, he had some business affairs to attend to. It was dark and past the supper hour when he returned, and Miss Galloway was already busy with her knitting. Effie, coming into the sitting room, found him and her aunt there together, and the mystery of the cellar had again entered into the conversation. Miss Galloway was speaking of Carney's efforts to solve the problem.

"I wonder if that man is ever really going to find out anything," said Effie.

"He works so hard and is always so hopeful, and yet so far it doesn't seem to me that he has accomplished very much. I believe it's a mystery that is altogether too deep for him, too deep for anybody—except perhaps that wonderful man in Boston."

Miss Galloway looked up from her work with a bewildered frown. "That wonderful man in Boston?" she echoed. "Who is he? And where in the world could you ever have heard about him?"

"I remember hearing my father speak of him once," explained Effie. "A man named Lavelle, Henry Lavelle. Father said he was probably the cleverest detective in the country."

The cold, dark eyes of their guest turned to the girl in mild interest. "Lavelle," he muttered. "It seems to me I have heard that name. I must have heard some Americans in Bombay speaking of him. You really think he is clever enough to solve such a baffling case as this?"

"From what father said about him, I should think he might," Effie replied.

"I don't suppose there could be much hope of getting such a man here," Miss Galloway mused. "And yet, it might be worth thinking about."

Her guest darted a quick, sharp glance at her. "You surely wouldn't entertain such an idea seriously?" he said. "There wouldn't be the remotest chance of his taking such a case. Or, if he did, his price would be prohibitive."

"I suppose so," and the old lady sighed. "We shall have to depend on Mr. Carney and hope for the best."

"We might ask Cousin Charlie what he thinks about it," Effie suggested.

The man from Bombay leaned stiffly forward in his chair and regarded the girl in front of him with a long, searching gaze. "Your cousin?" he queried.

"Yes; our Cousin Charles Barlow, the banker in Millsburg."

"Oh! I see." The man sank back and remained for a long time silent, apparently absorbed in thought. At last his gaze strayed to Miss Galloway. Abstractedly, he watched her deft fingers at work with the needles.

Softly the rear door of the room swung open, and Mrs. Marlin appeared. "P'raps it's—only my nerves," she stammered, "and I don't want to scare you. But I thought I heard somethin' movin' about in the cellar just now."

Miss Galloway glared at the woman. "Mrs. Marlin," she remonstrated, "I think it is about time you took a tonic for those nerves of yours. Unless you really hear something and are sure of it, do stop annoying us with these continual alarms."

"But I did——"

She broke off with a gasp, and Effie and the man from Bombay sprang to their feet, for from the depths of the cellar had come again that hideous, long-drawn peal of demoniac laughter.

"There! There!" cried the woman. "Listen to it! I knew I heard something moving down there."

The ghostly voice died out. Their guest dropped back into his chair and stared blankly, first at Mrs. Marlin, then at Miss Galloway, then at Effie. "It certainly was a human laugh," he said coolly. "What can it mean? You tell me the cellar has been searched again and again?"

"And always without findin' anythin'," Mrs. Marlin put in. "But nobody can tell me no more that there's nothin' down there. I've heard it too often. And didn't I see it move once, too? The house ain't safe. I wish you'd move out, Miss Galloway. We'll all be murdered here. And I'd rather die some other way." Muttering to herself, she returned to her kitchen.

The guest rose and began to pace slowly to and fro, his hands clasped behind his back, his gaze on the floor. "I can make nothing of it," he declared at last.

"Mr. Goddard, if we are to believe

our ears," said Effie, "we know now that there must be somewhere down there either a human being or a beast. Which do you think it is?"

"I should say a human being," he answered after a moment's thought. "In all my experiences in India I have never heard an animal with such a laugh as that, though the natives sometimes tell absurd tales of beasts with human voices. Some of them believe those stories, but they have never been able to offer me or any other white man any proof of them."

With bowed head he resumed his pacing of the floor. After a few moments he paused in front of the teakwood cabinet. Again he scrutinized it critically. Suddenly he stooped low and picked from the floor some small, shining thing which at that distance was not clearly apparent to the ladies. He held it up before his eyes.

"Have you lost one of your knitting needles, Miss Galloway?" he asked.

"Why, no," she answered, raising her eyebrows in slight surprise. "Is that a needle?"

"Evidently. But I notice that it is slightly different from those that you are using. Have you ever seen it before?"

"I'm sure I never have," she declared positively as he brought it to her for inspection. "It's not one of mine, and it's not one of my sister's. We have always used the same kind."

"That's rather strange. Where could it have come from? You don't knit, Miss Galt?"

Effie shook her head. "Not here. I brought no needles with me."

"Then perhaps it belongs to Mrs. Marlin," he ventured.

"She never knits," said Miss Galloway. "She doesn't know how. She told me so herself."

"Well, perhaps it belongs to the thing in the cellar," he said lightly as he tossed the needle on the table.

Effie's curiosity was not satisfied. She took the needle to the kitchen and asked Mrs. Marlin about it.

"Yes, it's mine," the woman admitted. "I guess I must have dropped it."

"But you don't knit, Mrs. Marlin," Effie reminded her.

"I never have," was the reply, "but I've decided to take it up. It's a good thing to know, and p'raps it'll help to quiet my nerves."

"What! After complaining about your eyes!" exclaimed Effie. "Even a little reading you have found too much for them, and you will find knitting strains them just as much."

"Well, I'll risk it," said the woman stubbornly. "Anyway, after I learn how, I can do it without lookin', like your aunt does. I got to do somethin' to quiet my nerves, even if I do risk losin' my sight."

Effie returned to the sitting room, where she repeated almost word for word the talk in the kitchen. "I can't understand what could have put such an idea into her head," she added. "She will never be able to keep her restless mind on knitting for two minutes at a time."

"I've certainly kept my mind on mine long enough for one evening," remarked Miss Galloway as she rose from the couch.

"Yes, auntie, it's getting late," said Effie. "We'll both go."

A few minutes later, when Mrs. Marlin, preparatory to going to her room in the wing, peered into the sitting room, she found the guest standing there alone, his hands behind his back, his unwavering, dark eyes staring straight ahead of him at the bare wall—eyes as expressionless as an ivory god's.

It was hours later—indeed, the first gray glint of dawn was against the eastern horizon—that Mrs. Marlin, scantily attired, stood on the stairs that led down to the kitchen hallway. In her room she had heard, or at least she

imagined she had heard, a sound as if somebody had been trying the locked rear door of the house. As she peered anxiously down into the dark, she could not make up her mind which way to turn. She dared not return to her room without knowing whether or not any one was prowling below. At the same time, she dared not rouse Miss Galloway or Miss Galt on such flimsy and uncertain evidence.

Mustering her small stock of courage, she crept slowly lower and lower. Before her now she could see faintly the door that she thought she had heard being cautiously stirred. A few steps across the hallway, and she would be able to assure herself that the door was still locked. Then she could return to her room satisfied, unless—— She shuddered at the thought that possibly somebody might really be there at that door.

She was at the foot of the stairs now, and desperately she nerved herself for the crossing of the hallway. The door was certainly quiet, and there was not a sound from any quarter. Her bare feet moved noiselessly across the floor. With a sigh of relief she found the door locked, and her straining ears could detect not the slightest movement of an intruder.

It was at that moment, when her fears had almost left her, that there came an unmistakable sound of stealthy footsteps. Too paralyzed with terror to move a muscle, she stood as if rooted to the spot, Suddenly, not ten feet away, the door of the cellar stairs swung open, and the dim figure of a man appeared.

A wild cry broke from her. Springing forward, the man caught her by the wrists. "Quick!" he cried. "Stop that noise! I'm not going to hurt you."

With a startled gasp she recognized him. "You!" she cried breathlessly. "What—what were you doing in that cellar?"

The iron grip on her wrists relaxed, and without waiting for a reply to her accusing question she turned and rushed up the stairs.

But her first, panic-stricken cry had already roused Miss Galloway.

"Mrs. Marlin!" the old lady was calling from somewhere in the upstairs hall. The women came together in the dark.

"What was it? What was it?" Miss Galloway demanded sternly.

Mrs. Marlin caught her breath and shivered. "That man!" she gasped. "I caught him coming out of the cellar! That man from Bombay!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN IN THE KITCHEN.

AFTER Mrs. Marlin's revelation concerning their guest, neither Miss Susan nor her niece, who had also been awakened by the disturbance, were disposed to return to their beds. So wracked by suspicion and fear of the man were they now, that to finish out their night's sleep would be impossible. And in fact the night was almost over. Already the stars were fading, and the twittering of the early birds that find the worms was coming through the open upstairs windows.

In Miss Galloway's room she and Effie discussed the problem presented by the alarming actions of the stranger they had welcomed to the house. Effie suggested that their guest should be asked to leave at once. Her aunt thought it might be well to send for Sam Whitlock or Carney. But, while the dusk turned slowly into the clear light of morning, the old lady was inclined to take a less and less serious view of the matter.

"For all we know, he may be perfectly innocent," she concluded at last. "He has been behaving in a very queer way, I'll admit, but there may be some good explanation for it. I think we had better wait and see what he has to say for himself."

They had heard him returning to his

room soon after Mrs. Marlin's discovery of him at the top of the cellar stairs, and, so far as they knew, he was still there. At any rate, there had come no sound of his moving about anywhere.

It was not until breakfast time that he was again in evidence. When the ladies came downstairs they found him slowly pacing the hall, as calm and self-possessed as usual, his impassive face betraying not a hint of what his thoughts or feelings might be.

"I'm sorry I caused such a disturbance last night," he began. "If I frightened you and your niece, I hope you will both accept my apologies."

For a moment Miss Susan regarded him with a cold, steady stare of suspicion. "You certainly frightened my niece and Mrs. Marlin," she returned icily. "I should say that an explanation was required fully as much as an apology."

If the sharpness of the old lady's words and manner disturbed his equanimity in the least, he gave no sign of it. His face was as sphinxlike as ever while his hard, expressionless eyes returned her stare.

"You are right," he said quietly. "And the matter is very easily explained. I realize that it must seem very strange to you that I should have been found coming out of your cellar at such an hour, but it was also a very strange incident that brought me there. I was awakened by some sort of noise. I don't know what it was, but it seemed to me that I could still hear the echoes of it after I came to full consciousness. I got up and went into the hall. It seemed to me that I could hear some slight sound from somewhere below, and I decided to go downstairs. When I came to this hall, I heard distinctly somebody or some living thing moving about in the cellar. Naturally I felt it was my duty to investigate. I groped my way into the rear hallway, struck a match which I found in the pocket of my dressing gown, and crept down the cellar stairs. Down there I found an electric light and turned it on. Nothing was there—absolutely nothing. It was while I was on my way back that I startled Mrs. Marlin in the hallway. It was unfortunate that she made such an outcry and alarmed you, but of course I hadn't counted on meeting her in the dark."

For a few seconds Miss Galloway considered his story in thoughtful silence. When she spoke again her tone and manner had softened perceptibly. "Why, that seems like a perfectly plausible explanation, Mr. Goddard," she admitted. "But, after all the strange things that have been going on in this house, you will understand why I was a little suspicious."

Effie was not so easily convinced. Her instinctive dread of the man had never entirely left her, and intuitively she believed she detected a false ring in his story. There was nothing in it that could be contradicted or disproven, but some inner sense told her that the color of truth was lacking. During breakfast she contributed very little to the conversation, but now and then she glanced furtively at their guest's unreadable face with grave suspicion.

An hour later she was passing through the front hall on her way to the kitchen to say something to Mrs. Marlin about household affairs, when she happened to glance into the sitting room. Standing beside the center table, the guest was alone, gazing abstractedly at the wall.

As she entered the rear hallway she heard with a little thrill of alarm the voice of a man in the kitchen. Immediately she realized that it was foolish of her to be startled by it, for it might be the voice of the grocer or the butcher or some delivery man. "There surely is something the matter with my nerves,' she told herself as she pushed open the kitchen door. The next instant she was startled with more reason, for the man

who confronted her she had never seen before, and his appearance was strikingly repellent.

"It's my cousin, Miss Galt," Mrs. Marlin explained quickly. "He was in Millsburg on some business, and, as we hadn't met in years, he ran out here to see me."

Incoherently the caller mumbled a word or two and turned away. But one glimpse of his face had been more than enough for Effie. The man's low, apelike forehead, his little, bestial eyes, his thick, flat nose, and his coarse, brutal mouth had been extremely unpleasant to look upon. The girl could scarcely conceal her repugnance as, while the caller's broad back was turned on her, she glanced at Mrs. Marlin. The woman, she noticed with a little surprise, was plainly ill at ease. In her restless eyes was a deeper look of anxiety than usual, and her manner was highly nervous.

"Aren't you well, Mrs. Marlin?" Effie inquired.

"Yes—yes, I'm all right," the woman stammered. "I guess p'raps I'm kind of excited seeing my cousin after so long. It's been three years——"

Suddenly, her voice broke into a gasp of terror. Again from the cellar had come that long-drawn, ghastly laugh which had startled them so often.

With a muffled growl the man swung about and faced them. For a moment he stared wildly first at the girl, then at Mrs. Marlin, his little, cruel eyes wide with alarm.

But Mrs. Marlin did not wait to return his look. She rushed into the hallway. They could hear the patter of her feet as she ran on to the sitting room. And then they heard her cry out wildly, as if she had suddenly discovered something there that had stirred her terror to an even higher pitch.

At that cry the man in the kitchen, brushing roughly past Effie, ran into the hallway, swung open the outer door, and left the house. For a few seconds she could hear the sound of his quick footsteps receding in the direction of the road.

In the sitting room Effie found Mrs. Marlin in a state bordering on collapse. Beside her, wholly unperturbed, stood the man from Bombay.

"What has happened?" cried the girl.

The guest shrugged his shoulders a trifle. "I seem to have alarmed her again," he answered. "She discovered me standing beside that teakwood cabinet with a knitting needle in my hand."

CHAPTER X.

THE PAINTED WOMAN.

THROUGH the remainder of the day Mrs. Marlin moved about doing her household duties as if she were in a trance. She had received a shock that seemed to have numbed what mental faculties she possessed. She showed more signs of nervousness than ever, and her colorless face, haggard now and stamped with an uncanny look of fear, was ghastly. Plainly she was in continual dread of Mr. Goddard, and she took pains to keep out of his way as much as possible.

The added perplexities the day had brought—the sudden alarm of the man in the kitchen and the terror of Mrs. Marlin as she discovered the guest in the sitting room with a knitting needle in his hand—proved altogether too complicated for Effie, who before long wearily abandoned her attempts at seeking an explanation for them. Now, however, she was convinced that their guest could explain a great deal if he chose. He must know, she reasoned, why Mrs. Marlin's discovery of him with the needle in his hand had thrown the woman into such a panic. It was not only Mrs. Marlin who was afraid of the man. Effie's dread of him was growing fast. In spite of the girl's dislike for Carney, she now hoped that he would soon call

again. She wanted to tell him of her fears and to ask his advice concerning the mysterious stranger from Bombay.

That evening, to her dismay, she found herself alone with the guest, owing to the fact that her aunt, who had complained of a slight illness, had retired to her room. But, while the two were together in the sitting room, he proved so affable, so agreeable and interesting, that she almost forgot her suspicions of him. Not once did he refer to the strange happenings of the morning, but diverted her with fascinating stories of India.

They had been sitting there for perhaps an hour when the doorbell rang. Mrs. Marlin came shuffling through the hall to answer the sumons and presently shuffled back again. Effie looked up with a little start.

Unannounced, a woman had stepped into the room—a tall, slender, graceful woman with a mass of yellow hair and a suspiciously vivid complexion. In a coarse way she was undoubtedly handsome, but work with the rouge stick and powder pads had not been particularly artistic and had been overdone. She moved over to the couch and seated herself.

"I wanted to see Miss Galloway," she explained, "but I guess you'll be better than nobody after this long trip I've made from Millsburg. Miss Galloway's a little under the weather, so that woman at the door told me. You're her niece, Miss Galt, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Effie. "But I'm afraid I don't know who you are."

"I'm Cora Langdon, who was engaged to your uncle. Ever hear of me? Shouldn't be surprised if you hadn't. Dave's family didn't seem to take much of a shine to me somehow."

"Mrs. Langdon!" Effie exclaimed.

"Uh-huh. And I might as well explain right off now that I didn't call for social reasons. I came here strictly on business."

Effie turned to Mr. Goddard. He had given no sign of intending to leave the room, and she introduced him. "Mr. Goddard was a friend of my Uncle David in India," the girl explained.

"That so?" the woman returned. "I dunno but I've heard Dave speak of him, though he never did talk much about his friends—or about his family, either, for that matter."

"You said you came on business," Effie reminded her, hoping to hasten her departure. "Is it anything I can attend to?"

"The more members of the family that attend to it, the better it'll be, I guess. I've come here to get the family pull. It's got considerable of a pull around here. Old family. Money in it. And that rich banker cousin in Millsburg, Barlow. And I guess Mr. Goddard, here, oughter be interested, too, since he was a friend of Dave's."

"I don't quite see what you are getting at, Mrs. Langdon," Goddard put in. "Suppose you come directly to the point."

"Now don't get restless," the woman retorted. "I'll come to the point soon enough. It's about who killed Dave Galloway. That's what I've come about."

Effie started up in surprise. "You don't mean you know of any clew!" she exclaimed.

"You're a good guesser. That's just what I do mean. I know of more than a clew. I know who did it."

Goddard gave a slight start. He was about to speak but, suddenly checking his tongue, leaned forward in his chair and eyed the woman intently.

"For two or three days now the bulls have been on my trail," the woman went on.

"The bulls?" Effie interrupted with a puzzled stare.

"Detectives," explained the woman impatiently. "As I was saying, they've been shadowing me, and they've been

trailing somebody else, too. I can see they're getting wise—getting a little wiser and wiser all the time—and, now they're on the right trail, it won't be long before they pinch somebody. And that somebody ain't going to be me—not if I know it."

With sudden horror of the woman, Effie shrank back in her chair. "Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "I don't understand why you are being followed by detectives."

"Well, I understand, Miss Galt and I'll proceed to explain in a minute. To begin with, me and your Uncle Dave was engaged. I thought at first that the old bird was rolling in money. Then I discovered too late that his share of the Galloway fortune had slipped through his fingers. He was so dead broke that he was desperate, specially since he wanted to get married. I wasn't so crazy about tying up to an old guy that couldn't raise much more'n car fare, and I was thinking of putting him on the toboggan, when one night he lets loose the fact that he was the smooth boy who'd stole the Barlow necklace."

"What!" cried Effie. "How dare you come here with such a story? I don't believe a word of it!"

"Miss Galt, I think we had better listen to what this woman has to say," Goddard interposed, "even though it is offensive."

"If you want to save your Uncle David's reputation, you'd just better listen. As I was about to say, he'd been visiting the Barlow house, and while he was going through an upstairs hall there he saw the necklace on Mrs. Barlow's dressing stand. All he had to do was sneak in and grab it. It was easy. And he being a relation of the family, they wouldn't think it was him that did it. They'd put it up to some porch climber.

"Of course that made considerable difference. If he could get $50,000 or $100,000 for that necklace, I figured I might as well hold on to him. But he was scared stiff, was sorry he'd done it. He didn't dare go to a fence with the stones, and he was just cagy enough not to let me have 'em, though that's what he'd ought to have done. Instead, he made up his mind he'd wait till the excitement blew over and the bulls got tired of hunting for anybody, and then he'd go to New York and dispose of 'em somehow. But he was so scared that he didn't know what to do with 'em in the meantime. He was afraid somebody'd find 'em in his house, and he didn't want to run the risk of carrying 'em anywhere else, because he'd got the idea that p'raps some bull was tracking him. So he dug a hole in his cellar and buried 'em."

Effie gasped. "It's impossible!" she cried. "My uncle may have had his weaknesses, but he wouldn't have done such a thing as to rob his cousin's house."

Sinking back on the couch, Mrs. Langdon laughed. The laugh was becoming, for her teeth were very even and white. Effie, however, was in no state of mind to notice her caller's charms.

"If you'd seen as much of the world as I have," the woman observed with hard cynicism, "you'd know that when he's in love even the most respectable old bird's likely to do pretty near anything to get the woman he wants. I had Dave so he'd eat out of my hand. He'd gone dippy over me—just like they do go at his age when they fall hard for a woman. The only thing I couldn't do with him was to get him to give me that necklace. I guess there was just enough of the old, hard-headed, suspicious New England Yankee in him to make him think I might take a sudden notion to jump the town with it and give him the go-by. That's the trouble with a man—always suspicious, no matter how much a woman thinks of him. He was going to keep it in the cellar for a month or two, and then he'd turn it into coin, and we'd be able to marry.

"Well, that wouldn't have been so bad if he hadn't happened to find out that I'd been pinched with a pretty hard bunch in New York, and that I'd got a record that made him dizzy. So he breaks the engagement. And there I was up in the air, with all my time wasted. It looked like I oughter be reimbursed somehow for all the trouble I'd taken with him, and there were those jewels buried in his cellar. That same day that he broke with me I ran across Bill Lamar."

"Oh!" gasped Effie with a shudder. "I've heard that name, Mr. Goddard. It's the name of the terrible man Uncle David said he had seen on the street in Millsburg. He said he was the man all Boston was talking about some years ago, that he was supposed to have killed a banker there named Hoffman and two or three other people."

"That's the same guy," said Mrs. Langdon. "Bill's had quite a record. He'd just done three years in stir when I met him in Millsburg. He had a fool wife who was broke when they sent him up. She didn't have nerve enough to be crooked herself, so she had to go to work. She changed her name to Marlin and got a job at housework with Susan Galloway."

Effie sprang to her feet. "Mr. Goddard," she protested, "all this sounds like the story of a woman not in her right mind. It'll all preposterous. I don't believe a word of it."

"Please sit down, Miss Galt," Goddard pleaded softly. "We have heard so much of it that we might as well let her continue."

"If you don't believe me to-night, you will before many days are over," said Mrs. Langdon with a laugh. "As I was about to say, when I heard that his wife was out here an idea came into my head. She could help Lamar to get that necklace, and he and me could go shares. I'd get half for giving him the tip.

"Bill's wife was scared, for, as I said, she's a woman without nerve enough to steal a penny from a blind man. But Bill's got a pretty good hold on her. She's afraid of him, and she's that fond of him that she'd do about anything he told her to. So she lets him in here nights, and he starts digging round in the cellar looking for the necklace.

"Then Dave Galloway discovers him down there. I don't believe Bill meant to kill him, but he wanted to make sure of making his get-away, so he gives him a whack with——"

"With the clinker fork," Goddard interposed softly.

"Oh!" gasped Effie. "How could you know that?"

"It's the only thing in that cellar that could have made the strange wound that was found on him," he explained. "I found it there last night. It's a very handy weapon about six feet long, with three prongs at the end of it, and it cut a wound like the mark of a claw."

For a moment Mrs. Langdon glared at the man suspiciously.

"Please go on, Mrs. Langdon," he urged. "There is one more mysterious death to be explained."

"Yes. Laura Galloway's. Bill was coming up out of the cellar when he came face to face with her. She gave one cry and dropped in a heap. It was just a case of being scared to death. It seemed funny she should have been down there in the dark all alone, such a timid, nervous thing as she was, but Bill's wife explained that. Laura Galloway had heard a noise, and she ran out into the hall. From the top of the stairs she saw Bill's wife down below and thought she was her sister, Susan. She thought Miss Galt must be downstairs, too; so, afraid to stay up there alone, she came down, calling to them. Bill's wife had gone into the kitchen by that time, and there was Laura Galloway alone in the hallway.

"Bill didn't dare come back here after

that because he thought p'raps the house was being watched nights by the bulls. He wanted to wait till they got tired. At least that's what he told me, but I've got a strong notion that he was lying. Last night, somehow, he got that necklace. He wouldn't have got out of Millsburg to-day in such a hurry if he hadn't got it. I always was scary about trusting him, but I had to take a chance. And now he's bunked me. It was a fool thing for him to do, for he oughter have known I'd get even by squealing; but Bill's pretty thick-headed in some ways. You can just bet I'm going to squeal, all right. The bull's can't do nothing to me, because they'll need my evidence. And I dunno as they could convict me of anything, anyhow. But they can convict Bill all right, after I've told all I know—if they ever catch him."

"I don't understand yet what brought you here, Mrs. Langdon," said Goddard.

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Goddard. I figured that to make things a little safer and pleasanter for myself I'd get Susan Galloway and the rest of the relations to use a little pull for me. I'm ready to tell all I know, but I don't want to get pinched and held as a witness, and I don't want to take any risk at all of being put on trial for anything, either. Colonel Barlow could fix it up all right. He's a friend of that county judge in Millsburg, and of the police chief. Barlow comes pretty near to running the whole town."

"But why should Miss Galloway or Colonel Barlow do anything for you?" Goddard inquired.

The woman laughed again. "Why? Well, just think a minute, Mr. Goddard. It wouldn't be nice to have it come out that Dave Galloway stole the Barlow necklace, would it? If Lamar happened to mention that end of it in a confession—and he's not the kind that would ever confess to anything—nobody would believe him. But I guess my story, added to the rest of the evidence, would make it plain enough that Dave was the thief. Fine publicity for the Galloway and Barlow families that would be!"

"Oh, I understand," muttered Goddard with a slight smile. "Very clever of you. Colonel Barlow, I understand, is a sort of political boss in Millsburg. With his power, I suppose he could do a good deal in the way of smoothing the way for you if he chose. There's another thing that interests me, Mrs. Langdon. Perhaps you know already that this household has been alarmed on several occasions by a voice from the cellar."

The woman remained silent. Her gaze was fastened furtively on the rear door of the room. "Listen!" she whispered. "There's somebody at that door!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAUGH.

CORA LANGDON had scarcely whispered the first word of warning when Goddard rose quickly from his chair. Softly, he crossed the room to the door on which the woman's eyes were turned, and suddenly he jerked it open. Confroning him was Mrs. Marlin.

Dazed and frightened, the little woman staggered into the room.

"You've been listening," said Goddard sharply.

"Oh!" the woman gasped. "I'm glad it's over—glad it's all over!"

"Does this woman know you, Mrs. Langdon?" Goddard asked.

"She's seen me here once before, but I don't think Bill ever told her I was mixed up in the job with him. Bill never told her much more than he had to."

Sinking weakly into a chair, Mrs. Marlin buried her face in her hands. She began to sob hysterically. "I'm goin' to tell all I know," she whimpered.

"Suppose you tell us about the voice in the cellar, Mrs. Marlin," Goddard

suggested. "Most of the rest we know already."

"And you know that, too!" Mrs. Marlin cried, staring up at him. "You found out yourself what that voice in the cellar meant."

"Mr. Goddard!" cried Effie. "Is that true?"

"Miss Galt," he returned, "I think your aunt has left her knitting needles on the table. May I borrow one?"

The girl stared at him in bewilderment. "I don't understand," she answered.

The man picked up one of the needles and crossed the room to the teakwood cabinet.

"Listen, Miss Galt." He thrust the needle deep into a crack above the head of an inlaid ivory god. Another moment, and there came once more the wild, long-drawn laugh from the cellar.

"That's it!" cried Mrs. Marlin. "Now d'you understand?"

"Understand!" stammered Effie. "How could anybody understand? The laugh came when he put that needle into the cabinet. But what does it all mean?"

"It means," explained Goddard, "that in the hollow base of the chimney in the cellar, through which the ashes are dropped from the sitting room fireplace, there is an electrically run phonograph with a repeater."

"It was my husband's notion," Mrs. Marlin hastened to add. "He was always pretty clever with mechanical things."

"But I never heard of a record with just one hideous laugh on it," Effie broke in.

"That's Harry Lauder's laugh," said Mrs. Marlin.

"Harry Lauder's!" cried the girl.

"I'm tellin' you the truth, Miss Galt. My husband got a Harry Lauder record and filed it down somehow and polished it off till there was only a few circles running round it—the circles that makes the voice. And them circles was just one long laugh. He'd seen these new repeaters in the store windows, and he makes one of his own to fit the filed-down record. He made it out of paper pulp and resin and glue and drying oil, and it worked better than the kind you can get in the stores. It was so smooth there wasn't a chance of the needle sticking on it. So one night he brings a little phonograph here and puts it through the hole the ashes are shoveled from in winter and props it up high with some bricks. Up top he dug a brick out, pulled the wire connected with the machine through the hole, put the brick back, and strung the wire along with the rest of the house wires to a place where he bored a hole through the ceiling. He pushed the wire through the hole so that it came out under the back of that cabinet. Then he took out the cabinet drawers, bored a hole in the bottom of the thing, and brought the wire up inside to a spot just above that ivory god. There was a big crack in the side of the cabinet right there, and if you push a knitting needle in three or four inches it pushes the button at the end of the wire and sets the phonograph going. My husband's a pretty good electrician. He knew how to connect the wire with the house wires all right. You see, with that repeater on the phonograph, it can be set going any time without being touched. You never have to swing the needle back."

"But why did he do all this?" demanded Effie.

"He wanted to get everybody in the house so scared that they'd never go down into that cellar nights. He was afraid somebody'd hear a sound some night and would come snooping down and catch him there. He wanted folks to think the house was haunted.

"He got me to do all I could to give folks that idea. That's why you saw that movin' shadow down in the cellar.

It was the tip of my little finger in front of the candle. I'd been practicin' at it for some time. And that's why, even before he'd had time to get the phonograph fixed up, you heard that cry. When I was a girl, my father was a ventriloquist in shows, and he taught me how to do tricks like that of throwing the voice. But Bill knew I couldn't keep that up very long without gettin' caught, or at least makin' folks suspicious of me. That phonograph trick would fool 'em all, and he figured nobody'd ever be sharp enough to find it out. And if we could get the Miss Galloways scared enough they might move out, and then he could work in the cellar as long as he pleased."

"I think that was your husband in the kitchen this morning," said Goddard.

"Yes, that was him. He hadn't dared come out here nights since Miss Laura's death because detectives might be watchin' outside. But he wanted to talk with me and find out how things stood, so he figured he could come out here and call in the daytime safe enough. When he heard that phonograph goin' and heard me yell—I always was scary and nervous—he knew the trick had been found out, and he got scared. I shouldn't be surprised if he'd jumped out of Millsburg by now. I hope so."

"He has," Goddard informed her to her astonishment. "But he won't get far. There's a detective after him. He'll be arrested whenever the order is given."

Mrs. Langdon started to her feet. "You! You're a bull yourself!" she cried.

"Yes, Mrs. Langdon, I am," he admitted. "I'm employed by the company that insured the necklace."

"Mr. Goddard!"

He turned to Effie as he heard her cry. She was glaring at him accusingly. "Miss Galt, I've acted unscrupulously, I know, toward you and Miss Galloway, but I've never let scruples interfere when they stood in the way of running down a murderer."

Mrs. Langdon quietly left the room. A moment later they heard the front door banging after her. "Goddard" made no move to follow. He knew she was under close surveillance.

"That's all, Mrs. Marlin," said the man. "You may go back to the kitchen."

The woman shuffled out, and he turned to Effie. "When I learned from Carney," he said, "about this man Goddard, I made up my mind to impersonate him. I believed your uncle had taken the necklace, and that his murder had something to do with its disappearance. There was so much baffling mystery here that I was convinced the best way to get to the bottom of it was to spend a few nights in the house not as a detective, but as a friend of the family. I knew nothing of you or your aunt. I was willing to suspect anybody. You or she might have some guilty knowledge, and I could not let my identity be known by anybody. I am afraid neither of you will ever forgive me. But I am going to try to make amends by doing everything in my power to keep the knowledge of her brother's guilt from poor Miss Galloway. She has suffered enough. I think we shall have to come to some agreement with the Langdon woman."

"But you believe my uncle stole the necklace?" said Effie.

The next moment she gave a little cry. The necklace was dangling before her eyes.

"I'm afraid he did," was the reply. "I dug it up myself in the cellar. It is pretty general knowledge that after a hole has been dug and refilled, air gets into the loosened earth, no matter how tightly it has been stamped down. If water is poured over the spot, bubbles

come up. With that knowledge, it didn't take me long to find out where these jewels were buried."

The girl turned to him with a wondering stare. "Your cleverness is almost uncanny," she said. "I hadn't believed that anybody could get to the bottom of all these weird mysteries, unless—she hesitated—unless perhaps that remarkable man my father spoke about —Henry Lavelle——"

"My dear girl," he returned as he slipped the jewels back into his coat, "I am Henry Lavelle."

CAN SCOPOLAMINE MAKE A PRISONER CONFESS?

AT a recent medical association meeting held in the Southwest, a Texas physician who has been experimenting with scopolamine, the twilight sleep anæsthesia, for the detection of crime mysteries and preventing miscarriages of justice, asked the doctors present to indorse the drugging idea, which proposes to subject a suspected person to an injection of scopolamine and question him while in this semiconscious condition. The doctor's plan was to try to experiment on 1,000 prisoners at the Federal prison of Leavenworth.

Aside from the fact that the underlying principle of such a procedure in the field of criminal practice is not far removed in spirit from medieval torture, the consensus of medical experts' opinions leads one to believe that it is wholly unreliable. The torture chamber is rightly regarded as a barbarous relic of a barbarous past. The use of scopolamine involves no physical pain of any moment and leaves no bad effects, but in effect it amounts to a justification of the principle that a confession may be forced under duress for the purpose of justice. Third-degree methods are now held in supreme abhorrence by enlightened public opinion.

However, the real objection to the use of drugs to make a prisoner confess is the fact that evidence obtained in this way is not trustworthy, despite what certain individuals say to the contrary. Psychologists, neurologists, and physicians generally, seem to be fairly well agreed that large doses of scolopamine render the patient practically incapable of keeping in touch with his environment. He does not know where he is or what is going on about him. His brain is incapable of answering questions normally, because the brain is subject to strange contortions. Like other drugs used to induce anæthesia, scopolamine causes the mind of the patient to rave and wander. Much talk, but little sense, is apt to be the result. It is true that some experiments have proven the reverse to the case, but these seem to be the exceptions which prove the rule.

Doctor Max G. Schlapp, professor of neuropathology at the Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital, said in this connection: "Of course it is a well-known fact that patients will talk freely under the influence of drugs and under hypnotic influence, and these influences are often employed in psychiatric work. But practically nothing extracted from a prisoner either under hypnosis or drugs could be used in court, and the deductions drawn from such revelations by the most expert psychologist must be regarded with absolute circumspection, where they are to be used only in the treatment of the sufferer. To try to convict a man or solve a crime mystery on the basis of the phantasmagoria that crowds a subject's brain under anæsthesia, ought to rank with the grotesque."

The Invisible Three

by Frederick Hemming

Author of "All in a Blaze," "The Slapped Face," etc.

HE had before been in institutions where the "silence rule" was in force. There Rang had learned to speak in whispers that came guardedly forth from the corner of his long slit of a mouth, the while he kept his eyes fixedly to the front and intent on his work. The man working beside him in the big reading room of the library would hear, but the guard pacing back and forth would not. Hence it was not ignorance that caused him to break the rule plainly placarded on the end wall of the room in which he sat.

He had first chuckled to himself in amazed surprise at a discovery he had made, as he turned the pages of the book that lay before him. His surprise gave way to a moment's spellbound conjecture, and then, before he knew it, he had slammed one bony fist down on the table and spoken aloud.

"An' I'd be invisible—invisible! Oh, my——"

The questioning upturned faces around the table broke in with silent protest upon his words and stopped him short in the middle of his exclamation. His glance fell on the placard on the wall above the desk, and he half turned his head with the old fear of the penitentiary guard upon him. But no uniformed man was in sight; it was only the curious gaze of those beside him and at near-by tables that told him he had broken the rule of silence. Chagrined, deeply incensed at having so far forgotten himself in the place that had come to be a sort of sanctuary to him, Rang quickly shoved back his chair and made for the public library exit.

He almost snickered at the thought, the handle of the door, when he stopped short and retreated into the anteroom that formed the exit way. If he were disgraced here, thought Rang, he had real danger to face outside. He had planned to remain in the library until night. He sat down on a bench and pretended to tighten the broken and knotted laces that held his dilapidated shoes on his feet. He hunched his narrow, stooped shoulders forward until his thin face, with its dull eyes, was quite hidden from those passing in and out. He felt forced to mutter to himself.

"Invisible—invisible—they couldn't see him! Now if I were just invisible—gee, that'd be one on the dicks. Say, what a haul I could make!"

He almost snickered at the thought, and yet he was half convinced that it was no laughing matter. Rang was ignorant and superstitious. His interest in the public library had not been due to any desire on his part to improve his mind or add to his previous education. It had suddenly occurred to him a few weeks previously that the library was the one safe and secluded spot where officers of the law would not be likely to wander.

Not that Rang's criminal operations were of such magnitude that the officers were continually on his trail. He was only a sneak thief. Petit-larceny exploits, picking an occasional pocket, if the opportunity were exceptionally good,

or snatching a woman's satchel, if the road was clear for a speedy get-away. He had never attempted a holdup. He was a coward, and to him it seemed that every policeman he met on the street glanced at him in an interested sort of way.

The atmosphere of the library suited him. The silence reminded him of long days over the binder-twine machine at the State reformatory. The worst thing about it at first was that in the library he must of necessity read something or pretend to read. Rang could read, but the effort was some labor, and at first he decided not to trouble himself unnecessarily. On his first visit he sat for an hour, book open before him, gazing at it with unseeing eyes. He suddenly awoke to the fact that there was less tedium, less effort in reading than in maintaining the pretense. Thereafter he pawed over the pages in a desultory way.

On this particular day Rang had plucked up courage to commit a crime. He had wedged himself into the shopping crowd at a bargain counter. Then his courage had failed, and he stood there motionless and frightened. A satchel hanging from a woman's elbow persistently forced itself against the hand which dangled at his side. With perspiration standing out on his forehead from the fear that possessed him, he yet managed to insert his shaking hand in the satchel and claw out a small purse which was part of its contents. He discreetly elbowed his way to the door. No one followed him; there was no alarm; yet Rang ran for an alley and later arrived at the library, with his thin, emaciated frame trembling all over from his exertions.

Amid the quiet recesses of the bookshelves he examined the purse. It contained exactly eighty-five cents and three car tickets. His small, blinking, deep-set eyes shone with the maniacal anger that indicated a slightly unbalanced brain. He mopped the moisture back from his sloping forehead onto his coarse black hair and barely kept himself from squeaking abuse at the woman who had dangled her slender funds within reach of his fingers.

After a time he seized a book at random and hurried to a table. It was by mere chance that it was the "Lay of the Nibelungen," and at length Rang found himself wandering in acute bewilderment through the adventure of Siegfried, he who subdued the dwarf folk of the magic mountain and slew the fire-breathing serpent of the marsh. He came to the account of Siegfried's magic "hood of darkness," which rendered its wearer invisible. Here Rang paused, while the full force of the idea seeped into his dull brain. It was Rang's first meeting with legendary lore, and he accepted the story with as much gravity as though he had found it in an encyclopedia.

Rang came from an ignorant and superstitious family. He could remember his father counting the warts on his own baby fingers, tying a knot in a string for every wart, and then burying the string. Sure enough, as the string rotted away in the ground, the warts disappeared. It was common knowledge among the mixed population of the neighborhood in which Rang had come to manhood, that a lock clipped from the hair of an intended victim and securely plugged in an auger hole in a cherry tree, would eventually cause the victim to be confined to his bed by a mysterious illness, until the plug was removed, and the hair dropped in the nearest stream. Rang found it easy enough to believe in magic spells. Enchanted hoods were a little bit beyond him, but the idea took root.

As Siegfried, rendered invisible by "the hood of darkness," performs for King Gunther the feats of prowess that enable him to overcome and win the mighty Brunhilda, Rang's attention wandered from the story and became

fixed on thoughts that his own fancy suggested. It must be, thought he, that hoods of wonderful power had once existed, for the story seemed plausible enough, and he had found it in the library, a place of good repute. In a flash he saw himself equipped like Siegfried, sallying forth in the broad light of day to rob and plunder, when doors and safes and vaults were alike unlocked. He saw himself with all the cool nonchalance that invisibility might give him, emptying trays of diamonds into his pockets, lifting huge rolls of cash from yawning cages, and picking pockets discriminately and with ease. In that moment's fascinated conjecture he hypnotized himself and half rose from his chair, banging his fist on the table.

"An' I'd be invisible—invisible! Oh, my——"

He was disgraced so far as the present gathering in the library was concerned, but his cowardice urged him to remain off the streets until dark. Therefore Rang sat on the bench near the library exit and fumbled with his shoe strings.

All that he could remember of charms and wizardry passed slowly through his mind. He was half incredulous, half believing, and he had no one with whom he could talk it over, no one, unless it was Pete Jannich, the cobbler. He regretted now that he had not been more intimate with the unhealthy, foreign-born mender of shoes. He had long been interested in him, however, for in the corner of Jannich's one little room, which was shop, bedroom, and living room, on the basement floor of the water-front tenement, stood a safe. It was evident even to Rang that where there was a safe, there must be money. Rang knew nothing about safes, but this one was so small that he was confident he could carry it out on his shoulder to some place where he could experiment at his leisure. Rang had a small damp room in the same basement, which he was allowed to retain because no one else would take it, and he occasionally paid his rent. Rang forced himself out onto the street and slunk along toward his lodging, wishing, as he sidled along the street, for the gift of invisibility.

A half hour later, arriving safely at the basement which sheltered himself and Jannich, Rang slipped cautiously down the mouldy rear steps and approached Jannich's door. The shop door was closed, but, as Rang paused for a moment, just outside he heard the murmur of voices within. Jannich had company and had shut up shop for the time being. That was nothing unusual, for he often had company; usually dirty, haggard men of his own race, who slipped in and out, occasionally with bundles of shoes under their arms.

Rang had come to the conclusion that Jannich was a sort of a fence, and he did not hesitate to spy upon him. Insignificant and physically and mentally weak as Rang was, he had yet found one human being lower in the scale than himself, a man whom he did not fear. This was the hollow-cheeked Jannich.

When Rang applied his eye to the keyhole he found that aperture had been taken care of by Jannich, who had thoughtfully stuffed something into it on the other side. Around the partition, which was made of ship lap, nailed on bare studding, Rang tip-toed, hoping for a crack or a knot hole. There was an air of tense interest in the voices inside, which awakened his curiosity and quickened his movement. Near the bare brick wall of the basement side he found a crack, where the lip of a grooved board had splintered and been torn away. By kneeling he could see the interior.

Three men sat with heads close together around certain objects which stood on the bench, where Jannich usually kept part of his stock and his shoe-mending tools. Rang's jaw dropped at sight of the curious implements. A

big glass contrivance, which to Rang had the shape of a huge straight-stemmed tobacco pipe, was suspended with its bowl down over a small alcohol stove and from its stem end a liquid was dropping slowly into a glass receptacle. Bottles stood about.

"H'm! He's makin' hooch!" said Rang and moistened his lips thirstily. Perhaps Jannich was a more desirable acquaintance than he had suspected.

Jannich, who was speaking, raised his voice slightly, and his words snapped Rang out of his whiskey dreams and back into that train of thought which he had brought with him from the library.

"We," said Jannich in his curiously stilted English, "we shall be invisible, safe, hidden. No man shall see us, no man shall know. We shall be the invisible three! And that"—he waved his hand toward the retort suspended over the alcohol blaze—"that will be the means——" His voice sank to a whisper.

Rang recoiled a trifle from the crack in sheer amazement. The way in which Jannich's words had linked themselves to a dream he had been having, and which he could not quite reject as preposterous, was startling to him.

"Invisible," he muttered, "invisible! Oh, my——"

His long coarse hair dropped down over his sloping forehead and over his eyes, and he threw it back with quick impatience. Jannich had arisen and was hovering over the affair on the workbench. He was now speaking in his own language, but softly and low. His hands were raised high in the air, then dropped to his sides, then waved in circles over the retort and the alcohol lamp. He whirled on his heel and revolved with outstretched arms, but ever his attention was fixed, Rang could see, on the big glass pipe from which liquid was slowly dripping into a receptacle. Rang could not understand a syllable, but the monotonous cadence of the man's words gave him an eerie feeling. The old negro yarb doctor, who had cured his mother and eight children of the ague, had carried on just that way over the medicine, and it had worked.

Jannich dropped his slight frame into his chair and coughed. A big, black-whiskered man, who sat opposite Jannich, started to speak in the same language. The red-headed man who sat between them the two, stopped him.

"Aw, can that lingo!" he growled. "Speak plain United States, if you want me in on this thing. You, Jannich—what will it do? How can we get the jack with stuff like that?"

"Listen, my friend," explained Jannich. He bent forward and spoke in low tones, pointing again to the retort. "One teaspoonful"—Rang heard him say; Jannich clasped his hands together and pulled them apart forcibly—"like that!" came the fragment of the conversation to Rang's ears. "And we shall be invisible, the invisible three—no one will see us—money—much money—they will fear——"

Rang's face was pressed against the wooden partition until he could feel splinters from the boards prickling in his flesh, but he did not stir. He was held fast by magic of his own weaving The red-headed man asked another question, and Jannich answered.

"A cupful—a half pint perhaps, in one——" Jannich's eyes went to the ceiling, while his hands slowly raised above his head in an expressive gesture. "So!" said Jannich.

Now the others nodded admiringly, and Jannich warmed to his subject.

"The invisible three—no one can see us work. We shall be rich. One warning, then we act—we shall be rich!"

Presently the retort had ceased to dribble; the glass container was half full of a golden sparkling liquid. Rang saw Jannich step swiftly to the little safe, whose door stood ajar, and return, bearing in his hand another glass bottle

with rubber stopper. Its contents were colorless. Jannich raised the two bottles, one in either hand. His evil eyes glowed, and his thin cheeks puffed themselves out in triumph.

"Keep them apart!" Rang heard that part of Jannich's whisper. "Now it is safe to handle them; put them together——" Jannich raised the bottles high in the air and smiled at them, as a man drinking a toast might smile at his glass. "One teaspoonful so strong it is, we shall be the wonderful invisible three!"

The red-headed man and the black-bearded man had sagged back in their seats. There was triumph and avarice and cruelty writ in large characters on their faces, but there was fear, also. Rang could not see that. He was far past even a semblance of calm reflection. He knew that in those bottles, which Jannich clasped so tightly in his talon fingers, was a magic potion of invisibility. He had heard Jannich say so. The wonderful hood wrought by the powers of darkness was forgotten. Jannich, befriended and aided by the evil one, had discovered an elixir that would enable one to pass as less than a shadow among men. There was no question in Rang's mind as to how Jannich had come by the secret. He had sold himself, very likely, to the evil one. He had watched Jannich weaving his spell over the brew, just as the yarb doctor had done when Rang's father had hired him to spread a sickness among his neighbor's cows.

Rang was convinced both as to what Jannich had compounded, and as to the source whence Jannich had devoted the knowledge of how to compound; but, with the unbalanced part of his mind suddenly in the ascendancy, he was not in the least perturbed at what he contemplated. By hook or by crook he was going to come into possession of that magic draught. There was enough in the two bottles to last him a long while.

"They got to be mixed," he told himself. "One teaspoonful he says. Invisibility!"

Softly he padded back past the coal bins and on through a creaking door that let him in to the unlighted room. Here a pile of rags in the corner served as his bed. Fumbling under the rags he produced a butcher knife which had been ground down to a fine point for some sinister purpose. With it came a half brick which had been worn smooth by much whetting. Rang reclined against his door, with his ear to its crack, and, as he listened for the departure of Jannich's guests, he whiled away the time by carefully honing the knife over and over and over.

Jannich's door opened, and heavy feet clumped on the stairs. In a few moments he heard the regular tap, tap, tap of the cobbler's hammer. It was time to move. With the knife in his inside coat pocket, and with a pair of cast-off shoes in his hand, Rang tiptoed softly past the coal bins into Jannich's shop. The cobbler looked up, as Rang entered, and spoke with deference and humility.

"Good day to you, Mr. Rang! A pair of shoes to be mended, is it?"

It was that very air of humility and conscious inferiority in Jannich that gave Rang the nerve to attempt what he had in mind. Had Jannich evinced the least spark of manhood, Rang's own despicable self must have quailed before him.

"Hello!" said Rang brusquely, and, as he approached Jannich, he straightened up and walked like a man. "Yep, a pair of shoes needin' mendin' bad, an' I want a good job done, too."

The cobbler meekly extended his hand for the shoes and bent over them for a closer inspection. In a flash he found himself face downward on the floor, with his hands held behind his back. He struggled and found his voice, then grew silent instantly, as one hand was re-

leased, and a sharp point bit cruelly into his flesh.

"Not a squawk! Keep yer mouth shut!" ordered Rang. "If you want to live, crawl over there and unlock that safe!"

There was a moment's mental struggle on the cobbler's part. The blade jabbed him again, and blood followed its point. Whining with pain, Jannich signified his willingness to obey. Across the floor to the safe Rang forced him to worm his way, still holding one arm twisted behind him, and with the knife at his throat. Reaching with his trembling hand Jannich fumbled at the combination, and the keen-bladed knife speeded his movements. The door swung open. Rang first saw the little canvas bag that contained what he used to desire—money—but he passed abruptly from it to two bottles that sat on a shelf by themselves. One held a golden liquid that sparkled, while the contents of the other were apparently colorless. Jannich's shaky hand plucked at the canvas bag.

"I have much money. You will take it?"

His question was almost a plea, and Rang interpreted his motive correctly. Jannich valued the elixir of invisibility far above silver and gold. Rang smiled his evil smile, and a maniacal light was in his eyes. His left hand shot suddenly over Jannich's mouth, and the knife rose and fell. Stepping back over the body with the two bottles in his hand, Rang set them down suddenly on the work bench. There was some one at the coal bin filling a scuttle, and he could not go at once to his room.

Now a new idea struck him. What need to go to his room? He held in his hand the two ingredients for the compound that would shield him from the sight of all men. He grew reckless all at once at that thought, and his insane laughter rang queerly, muffled through the basement rooms.

"Put 'em together," chuckled Rang. "Take a teaspoonful—I'll walk out right under their noses. Ha, ha!"

His shrill mirth subsided. There on the workbench sat a large glass jar, large enough to hold all the two bottles contained. Instantly he emptied their contents into the one receptacle. The golden liquid swirled around through the colorless mass of the other in rings and streaks of fire.

"It's got to mix," said Rang, as he raised the jar and shook it, while he glanced around for a spoon. "One teaspoonful, Jannich said, an' they can't see me. Invisibility!"

Noise of heavy feet on the stairs warned him, but he was still shaking the mixture and looking around for a means of measuring the proper dose, when the red-headed man and the black-bearded man came suddenly to the door. There was a shrill cry of fear from Rang, as the red-headed man hurtled himself at Rang, and the jar dropped to the floor.

There was a sudden rush of air, like unto a mighty wind. Where four men had been, there was now but a cone-shaped pit, torn deep into the sticky clay soil. A shower of bricks rained down on the street and the buildings across the way. A gaping hole appeared in the side wall of the tenement, and the floor above lurched gently down into what had been the cobbler shop of Jannich and the lodgings of Rang. The golden liquid had united with its colorless brother, and in their union had been found strength.

Jannich had been more than a cobbler. He had discovered the formula for a powerful explosive, and he had planned with the red-headed man and the black-whiskered man to organize a private Black Hand society to prey upon the fears of his fellow country men and levy a tribute that would make them rich. Their threats were to be backed up with sample doses of the explosive in bomb

form. Jannich had dreamed great dreams of "The Invisible Three," as he planned to call his organization, working ever in secret and growing richer and richer. Not one of the hopes and plans of The Invisible Three had been realized, thanks to meddlesome Rang.

But cowardly, feeble-minded Rang had realized to the utmost his ambition to render himself invisible. Perhaps from his viewpoint, if he still had one, his ambition had been too well realized, for the invisibility was certainly permanent.

ENGLAND AGAINST HANGING OF WOMAN

THE question of capital punishment for women is now being agitated in England as the result of the sensational trial of Mrs. Edith Thompson, with Frederick Bywaters, for the stabbing to death of her husband. Since the imposition of capital punishment on the two prisoners at the conclusion of their trial, public sentiment has swung in their favor. Her execution has been stayed on account of her sex, and in the meantime Mrs. Thompson will enter an appeal. On legal grounds she has no case, but the question of sex is certain to get her a hearing. Besides, for more than thirty years no woman has died on the scaffold in England. Her execution is being opposed as a revival of a disused practice.

This argument has brought out the opinion of the newspapers that either both parties to the crime should be executed or neither should be. Bywaters, according to the judgment of the court, acted largely under Mrs. Thompson's influence in various unsuccessful attempts to get rid of her husband until finally he stabbed him while he was walking beside Mrs. Thompson. If the sentences are commuted, it will mean twenty years of penal servitude in rigorous isolation for both of them.

SANITARIUM RECORDS REVEAL DOPE SITUATION

STATE and Federal narcotic agents recently seized the records of a "dope sanitarium" at Hollywood, California. The sanitarium was in charge of Doctor Charles Blessing, according to the police, but it was the property of Doctor John Scott Barker, who is now under arrest at Oakland on a charge of selling narcotics to patients he was supposed to be curing of the drug habit.

Among the papers found was a "patient list" containing the names of thousands of men and women prominent in the State and nation. A large number of pitiful letters in the lot asked about the dope cure. These communications were written in answer to an advertisement inserted in various papers. Many of these letters were from persons who had no means, but were pitifully seeking a cure for the drug habit. Some of the patients, it is said, were charged as much as $2,000 a week.

As a result of the information given in the Barker papers, a sweeping clean-up of the drug situation in Hollywood, Los Angeles, and the Pacific coast generally, is expected. At the same time it was discovered that dope hospitals for the supposed cure of the habit were employing runners, who make recommendations to dope users and get from $25 up, if the person recommended takes the cure.

Hollow Hearts

by Florence M. Pettee

Author of "Such a Good Man," etc.

WITH decorous pomp and splendid ceremony John Shadow had been gathered unto the marble mausoleum of his slumbering forbears. The fine and impressive funeral cortege had long since wound sinuously away from the City of the Dead. In solitary state the bier of the latest Shadow rested in the center of the mausoleum. By the order of John Shadow the casket had not been sealed away with other departed Shadows. For, hard-headed though the man had been through life, he had overtly expressed one mighty obsession—a wholesome, or unwholesome, fear of premature interment. To his attorneys he had long since given the mandate that, for three days subsequent to his death, his coffin should rest, with its top unfastened, in the center of the family mausoleum. Furthermore the huge iron-wrought door of the vault was to be on its catch, permitting easy exit from within.

Dollingham & Dollingham, attorneys, had been liberally paid for their pains concerning the ascertained deadness of John Shadow. So they carried out to the letter of the law his dogmatic behest. Even the body, in accordance with his specified order, had not been embalmed. The vault was sufficiently cold, and that preservative precaution was not necessary. At the expiration of three days, if nothing occurred to arouse suspicion, the undertaker was to seal away the casket of John Shadow in the right wall of the mausoleum. Then the world at large would know that the man who was Shadow had passed from the realm to the living to the bourn of eternal shadows.

The magnificent floral pillow on the top of the casket stirred slightly. Like the breath of an impending, devastating wind, it moved the heart of pale white roses, with the single word, "John," inscribed thereon in forget-me-nots. Yet the interior of the mausoleum was proof against drafts and as black as some earthly Erebus. Outside a dismal, dripping rain pattered a devil's tattoo on the eerie, glistening sides of the marble tomb.

Slowly, inch by inch, the cover of John Shadow's casket reared itself, rudely scuttling from its mahogany top the floral tributes which reposed there. Falteringly, weakly, the form of John Shadow crawled forth from the narrow, mahogany confines that had held him seemingly dead for forty hours. Chalos, that powerful, little known Oriental drug, of which he had imbibed, he had surreptitiously purchased on his last trip to the Far East. He had bought it then merely because the possession of a drug, which could bring on so vivid a semblance of death as to foil all medical lore, had both fascinated him and appealed to his sense of humor. He little dreamed how vital a part the vial was to play in his subsequent destiny.

The revivified John Shadow staggered weakly to the door of the mausoleum and listened. From sheer weakness he continued to lean against the barrier sealing the dead from the living. The drug had left him fearfully weak, and the vault seemed stifling in its breath-

lessness. The scent of the profuse floral pieces nauseated him. On the marble roof the rain still played a silver requiem for the soul of the supposed dead man —for the complete taking off of John Shadow.

Rested by his temporary pause John Shadow slid to his knees and crawled slowly on the marble slabs. He groped in the velvet blackness, as though stealthily stalking something. Suddenly there was a tiny click, then a pause. Now a soft light sent its eerie effulgence from a narrow pit in the floor. John Shadow had touched the hidden spring on a certain slab, unearthing the trap he had himself fashioned, during those dire weeks when he had set the initial wheels of his plan in action. His hand shone white against the electric torch he held, as he explored the shallow depths. He shivered slightly. For the confines, which the spring had revealed, were long and narrow, like the wooden jacket he had just cheated through the cunning of the Oriental mind.

With shaking, icy fingers he brought forth a silver flask from the gash in the earthly bowels of the tomb. He drank of the contents thirstily, yet sparingly enough. It was the antidote for completely dissipating the after effects of the insidious drug. He produced a long black motor coat, a black slouch hat, and rubbers. Then, with extraordinary care, he reached inside the long black wrap to assure himself that a certain highly important envelope rested there. The staccato rattle of papers rewarded his trembling fingers. He jumped, for the sound of the crumpling sheets broke the stillness with surprising sharpness, like the dry cackle of bones sneering within. Far off he heard the mournful, long-drawn howl of a dog and the honk of a distant motor car, like some fantastic echo of the canine cry.

John Shadow deposited the silver flask in another inside pocket. Then he reached into the shallow, gravelike pit again. With set, grim lips he brought out a long, silent object clad in dark, ordinary business clothing. With trembling fingers he replaced his own cerements of death with the sack suit from the quiet figure on the floor. When the change had been made, a slight smile for the first time filtered across his ascetic features. The figure on the floor was a marvelous work of art which he had purchased at no little sacrifice of gold and through much stealth, on a special trip to Tokyo. A Japanese master had wrought the thing, that waxen image which tallied to the fraction of an inch with every lineament of the man who was Shadow. As he gazed down on the startling effigy, he had the baffled sense of looking at his own dead body through some extraordinary trick of levitation. For the thing on the floor outwardly resembled him, as his own empty clay might have done. Yet within there was neither soul nor vital organs. How like *her*, the shell on the floor was! A gilded husk of outward appearances—nothing more.

John Shadow lifted the waxen image of himself clad in his discarded cerements into the mahogany box. Slowly he closed the lid, leaving it open a crack, as it had remained when it had been left for those three days of precautionary vigil before sealing it away with the shades of departed Shadows. With extraordinary care he replaced the flattering floral pieces, marveling on the empty plaudits of time-worn custom.

With one final glance about him he saw that the narrow, long trap in the floor was securely closed. In the bottom remained only a shovel and a hoe. Should the trap by some awkward accident be discovered, people at large would set it down to some further idiosyncrasy of the odd millionaire. All was well within. The proxy of the man who was Shadow slumbered satisfactorily within the mahogany casket. Only a

madman would dream that the thing was a waxen image dolled up in the real Shadow's burial clothes. There wasn't a hundredth chance for a slip-up.

For the first time in a dominant life John Shadow experienced a faltering irresolution. He was stretched on the rack of an eleventh-hour turning away from the extraordinary thing which he had planned as carefully as his latest coup on The Street. He was moved with a mighty desire to turn back for one last glimpse into the house that had been his home. But what right had he to suppose that his mere demise could effect any change in empty, hollow hearts? Yet hope, and something stronger, dynamically kept dragging at him with unseen hands for an eleventh-hour return to the place which should know him no more. John Shadow alternately cursed and waited, calling himself a spineless fool for his weakness. Ultimately, however, he harkened to the persisting, summoning something within him.

With a twisted smile the man who was Shadow pulled his slouch hat low over his eyes, hunched his ulster collar high under his chin, and stepped out into the rain. Once he staggered or slipped on the wet flag outside. But soon his dark-clad lineaments were swallowed up like some black art into the shrouding pall of the rain-driven night.

II.

No fanatical pilgrim ever toiled toward his Mecca more arduously, with alternating currents of hope and despair seeping through his veins, than did John Shadow tread the weary, though short, trail leading back to the home of his ancestors. Each step he took in the baptismal font of plunging rain seared on his mind many scenes from bygone years, even as a drowning man glimpses in one filming flash many pages of his life, as he is sucked into some watery vortex of oblivion. And as John Shadow mechanically kept up his persistent pace, he wondered, half ironically, half hopefully, whether his death would open up for him an unexpected resurrection or damnin realization. For John Shadow, like all those who had gone before him, was a zealot at the altar of loyalty.

He leaned against the trunk of a sturdy tree. The drops thudded on the leafy arch under which he had sought momentary sanctuary. Through the pauses of the rain he heard again the long-drawn, melancholy wail of a dog. The sound set him into fresh paroxysms of shivering. For, deep within his riven soul, John Shadow feared this unaccustomed irresolution, this eleventh-hour turning back, feared it, yet welcomed it, as a drowning man catches at an empty straw.

Once more he set off at a loping dog-trot. The rest and the symphony of sympathetic rain had slightly laved his weakness. Straining his eyes through the warp of the rain and the woof of the night, he beheld in its solitary magnificence and aloofness the brick mansion erected by his great-great-grandfather. Throughout the years no scandalous breath had ever sullied the name of Shadow. Perhaps the Puritanical strain in them had made them punctilious in the standards they not merely set, but which they expected in return. For to John Shadow disloyalty was a cardinal sin, and lack of devotion its ugly, venomous twin. He understood no other code. His was a nature essentially primitive, childishly simple.

The front of the Shadow mansion was properly draped in darkness. That would be like them, ever with an eye to outward appearances and what the world at large might think. What a consummate, blind fool he had been—his eyes banded with what he expected, rather than what actually existed!

With rubber-shod tread he crept swiftly to the rear of the silent house.

It was flanked a hundred yards behind with a sylvan growth. From the rear of the house occasional lights flickered like diaphanous fireflies. No chance passer-by could glimpse the rear of the house of mourning, whence the master had passed but some hours before, a quiet, still thing, paradoxically both quick and dead.

Keeping to the clotting blackness of the shrubs, John Shadow slipped in silently through an unlocked side door. Like the noiseless wraith he was supposed to be, he slid the barrier between the darkness and blinding light. Was it to be symbolical? With his mouth set to a grim, straight line, he listened. Above the patter of the rain he heard faintly the rapid, staccato insistence of swift music coming from a room upstairs.

As the flame draws the moth, so did the insidious sound of those strutting, syncopated strains lure John Shadow to it. He had not been mistaken. The phonographic notes came from Mona's sitting room on the second floor, decorously at the rear of the house. Long before his steps, deadened by the thick pile of the rich carpets, approached within proximity of the music, he heard the sound of laughter, mirth carefully attuned lest it escape unwarily to chance ears and to the tongues of indiscreet servants.

John Shadow shuddered. For the muted sound of merriment was set in the timber of joy—a pæan to freedom which his passing had brought—his passing and the never-ending stream of gold which the Shadow fortune would assure. For no Shadow had ever indited a will. Each and every one had declared that such a testament was an open avowal of distrust to the next of kin. In their simple lore of faith, his forefathers had been content to pass beyond the ken of mortal eyes, permitting the laws of inheritance to take their usual course without recourse to attested behests on paper. More than once John Shadow had voiced the sentiments of his ancestors concerning his vast and fast-growing estate. Had he been wrong to place such temptation before easily swayed and tinseled devotion?

The sounds of the music became more insistent. The stressed cadences of the latest jazz prodded his eardrums. Again he heard light laughter from within. Clinging to the wall he edged along the rich, dark paneling until he was within sight of the door crack. They had not even taken the care to shut the wooden barrier on the sound.

His progess to the shaft of light, which cut the darkened corridor like a knife thrust, was snailish in its torment. He was like a man with a jumping tooth, who insists on prodding it to make the ache more or less.

With his face drained of every particle of color, he surreptitiously peered through the crack of the door. Strangely enough no fear of discovery had quickened him. The servants never left their quarters at that time of night; and there were many doors cutting the dark corridor through which he could seek a hasty retreat, if necessary. He was so strung up with a fixed purpose that fear for his personal safety had been stripped from him.

Then he saw—all that he had expected and more. Mona was there, and the man who had been his friend—so the world had said. And there was no doubt concerning their attitude toward him—or to each other. He had not been wrong. Even in the last extremity his sentient apprehension, belated on this occasion, had appraised him of the carefully hidden truth.

He turned away abruptly. He had always been a man of quick motion and lightning decisions. As he stumbled down through the darkness of the corridor he had the sensation of a man exploring some dark labyrinth for one

enheartening light. Would he find it in that jazz-drenched, wantonly lighted house of sham, where he in life had been merely a prodigal provider; where supposedly his fortune in death would still rain down golden torrents, as a reward for faithlessness?

A door at the end of the corridor was shut. Warren, his twenty-one-year-old son, occupied rooms there. With quickened heartbeats John Shadow approached the door. A light pitted the darkness from the keyhole. Straining down quickly John Shadow harkened. He felt like a man listening in at his own funeral, like some astral body magically resurrected to peer into the heart of this hollow habitation.

Voices came from within—Warren's voice and that of some mysterious other person. The other didn't matter.

"Sure thing," he heard Warren say. "Why pull a long face? The governor was only a figurehead to me, anyhow. Always tight on the money for fear a fellow'd throw a good time. But now I guess the lid is off. I'm my own boss, and I can hit a seventy-five-mile pace as soon as Mrs. Grundy gets over grunting. Would do it to-night, if it weren't for blamed conventions. Hang it all, anyway! But it won't be for long—glory to Allah!" His voice trailed off with a laugh.

John Shadow turned away. Somehow he felt better. For the boy had shown one decent trait. He was brutally frank in his disgust of convention, even as he was openly glad for the death which had loosened up the family purse strings.

"Gold, gold—always gold!" muttered Shadow. "It eats out the hearts of men and replaces them with stone."

Yet he, John Shadow, had exulted in the piling up of the blight! Was this his just reward? But within him a still, small voice seemed to say: "Gold is the touchstone to bring out the dross, or its own kind, within the hearts of men. It is the destruction of the weak, but the salvation of the strong." With the thought John Shadow felt strangely better. Not that he sought to bolster up his lore of life by excuses, but by plausible explanation.

There was one more move to be played in the strange drama he himself had brought to its focal head. He crept down the stairs to the servants' quarters, wondering, perchance, how old Jerry, who had served him punctiliously for fifteen years, might be disporting himself. The world talked much of the devotion of old servants. Would old Jerry run true to tradition or——

Jerry kept late hours. Voices floated up from the butler's pantry. Shadow's heart skipped a beat. One of the speakers was Jerry.

"Tom," came Jerry's voice to the butler, "I'm an old fool. I stayed too long. A fellow's an idiot to hang to a lost cause in the hope that something will change. 'Tain't right," he exploded peevishly. "Fifteen years of faithful service with the hope that he would grow a little sense and make a will like decent folks before he cashed in. And now he's gone and done it like all the others. And nary a servant in the house will get a penny of his money in a decent will, like proper folks always make. 'Tain't right! Fool that I was, I should have quitted him years ago. But he was generous," the voice went on truculently, "and now he's gone and died without providing for any of us. No gentleman's trick, I'll tell you."

For the first time that somber evening a glint of real amusement wreathed John Shadow's wan, pale features. Jerry was as petulant as a child cheated out of a long-desired gilded toy.

"What a funny thing life was, to be sure," thought Shadow bromidically, as he turned away.

He left the house by a rear door rather than by the exit through which he had entered. The rain had abated, and light clouds made sailing plumes against the

former sable vault of the sky. But, as he stepped on to the soggy, rain-splashed earth, he slipped and sprawled awkwardly. His fall made a soft, thudding noise. But the ejaculation which he mouthed was nipped suddenly by the sound of a low moan. Once it came weakly, faintly, like some eerie, far-off wail—like some unexpected mourner holding solemn vigil over the thing that stood for Shadow within those marble walls.

Decidedly curious and with quick-beating heart, John Shadow remained on the wet ground, his every sense strung tight. Again the low cry came, plaintive, mournful, yet weakly exultant. This time Shadow knew that no unearthly, belated, and sincere mourner sat in solitary vigil beside his distant bier. For the moaning sound was close at hand, and his keen ears distinguished a slight motion in the darkness just beyond him.

Cautiously Shadow crept along. Overhead, through a rift of sodden cloud, a single star peered out, anæmic, pale, but smilingly confident. And the sight of it thrilled John Shadow. It was like a sign to him, a symbol of dawning hope that all the world had not forgotten him, had not relegated him to the shades of oblivion, as a mere gatherer of golden shekels.

Something tinkled away from his touch. Cautiously cupping his palms, he turned a pocket torch on what he had disturbed. It was a platter of untouched bones. His light, crawling slowly over the damp grass, pricked out other dishes, laden with juicy spoils from a bountiful table. Every tempting morsel was untouched.

A little whinny caught his ear—a cry, half moan, half joyous. He turned his torch toward the sound.

"Tatters," a little mongrel cur he had rescued from the gutter some two years before, lay weakly staring up at him, with gaunt and fever-bright eyes. The time was not long enough to bring emaciation to the little dog, weakly lying there. But the foodless hours and the oft-repeated, long-drawn cries which the sole mourner at Shadow House had sent abroad, had been sufficient to drain the tiny yellow form of its usual agile exultation at the coming of the master. For John Shadow had never failed to come down to the dog morning, noon, and night. The canine waif of the streets had somehow struck a responsive chord in the brusque, matter-of-fact money-making master.

For the first time the real portent of those faint, long-drawn cries, which he had heard even when returning from the dead, now penetrated John Shadow's quickened consciousness. Even at that time the canine cries had aroused a haunting sense of familiarity which his doped condition had then failed to recognize.

Tatters opened his mouth. Yet no sound emerged. The yellow cur seemed entirely spent with the long hours through which he had voiced his grief, and while he had steadfastly refused a morsel of food. Feebly he wagged his tail and strove to get up. Yet he was too weak to rise. But, if ever human devotion and loyalty and joy peered forth from any orbs, John Shadow now beheld those triple virtues plainly registered in the dumb eyes of a common yellow cur.

As Tatters nozzled the well-remembered hand, something caught in Shadow's throat. The dog's nose was feverishly hot, and his tongue was furred and dry from long laments and foodless, drinkless hours.

The man yanked at the restraining leash, breaking it neatly in the middle. It would appear that Tatters had broken his own bonds and run away. With his stern, austere features magically softened, John Shadow took the limp form in his arms. Without a backward glance at the gay-lighted windows of the hol-

low house, he disappeared into the warm fragrance of the obliterating dusk. It closed over him like a silent benediction.

He paused but once in the swift pace his stride had now assumed. This was to fumble in his pocket and bring forth the stamped, addressed legal envelope. He stopped under the shadow of a screening bush and read for the last time the writing on the signed, witnessed, and sealed testament.

The document was brusque in its brevity—iron-clad in brilliant, legal phraseology to circumvent any technical quirk or attempt at disavowing the desires of an odd client. There was a bequest of ten thousand dollars to the old servant, Jerry, and other sums in the ratio of their tenure of service for the rest of the help. They had served John Shadow well. Why penalize their servitude? They had been hired to render paid service. This they had done.

One dollar was bequeathed to Mona Shadow, and a similar pittance to Warren. The rest of the fortune was devised in its entirety to charity. The testament had been drawn up by the finest attorneys in another State. The legal men had assured John Shadow that the will would stand, however great the howl which his infuriated heirs would set up. For no one could produce a jot of evidence that John Shadow had not been in his right mind when he caused the will to be drawn. So he was content. He knew the furore the document would create, since he was the first Shadow to depart from the precedent set by his ancestors.

He sealed the envelope and deposited it in a near-by letter box. The communication was addressed to the "Judge of Probate" there—a punctilious jurist who did not know Shadow personally, but merely by reputation. The proving of the will would be safe in his hands.

As John Shadow flung aside his great fortune—with the exception of a hundred thousand dollars which now awaited him elsewhere—he felt as though he had dropped an ugly chrysalis from his shoulders and emerged a new and strange entity. He had had enough of the garnering of gold.

Of a verity the man who had been Shadow was dead. His empty other-self lay cold and still, entombed within the mausoleum of bygone ancestors and past traditions.

Many hours later, by devious and prearranged ways, John Shadow, stripped of all the lineaments of his former life and self, stepped aboard the gangplank of a clipper craft. Eager, preparatory steam was billowing forth from the snouty funnel amidships.

A man in a captain's uniform saluted him.

"Yes, sir. Boat's all shipshape, Mr. Mitchell, sir. Clipper lass."

Then he caught a glimpse of the huddled, contented, jubilant Tatters, which the erstwhile Shadow still carried.

"Sorry-looking dog you've got there, sir. Regular tramp."

"No, not a tramp—a thoroughbred!" murmured the man who was Shadow.

CARRIER PIGEONS USED TO TRANSPORT ILLICIT DRUGS

WHEN John Sullivan was arrested recently in Norfolk, Virginia, charged with selling illicit drugs, sleuths who brought about his arrest declared that he used carrier pigeons as a means of transporting the drugs from Norfolk to Roanoke. At the time of his arrest, which occurred at Norfolk, Sullivan was in possession of narcotic drugs and had two carrier pigeons with him.

Black Shadows of Sawtrell House

by Nicholas Silver

Author of "Stolen Clothes," "Sealed for Fifty Years," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

WHEN Macready enters the room of Madeleine Sawtrell, in the big country house of her father, Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell, he expects to find a rich swag. A noise sends him into her closet, and presently he sees "Mammy" Loftus, an aged negress, enter the room and take out an old picture from Madeleine's bureau drawer.

That night John Duncan, a rich young man whom Sawtrell wanted Madeleine to marry, is killed under the balcony of Madeleine's window. A search is made of the grounds, when Sawtrell learns that earlier in the evening a strange face was seen at the window. Sawtrell pauses in the hall to speak to his wife, and with a loud cry the woman drops to the floor, as Mammy whispers something in her ear.

Next day Macready, who has fallen violently in love with Madeleine on sight, decides to get a job on the estate. He applies to Sam Constant, the man who has charge of Sawtrell's many horses, and Sawtrell turns him over to Mammy Loftus, the old negress who seems to hold the destinies of Sawtrell House in her aged black hands.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE LAST MOMENT.

THERE had been many a peril faced in the wild life of Macready, but now there passed through him the same chill which he had felt when he stood concealed in Madeleine's room, watching Mammy Loftus. The little negress terrified him utterly, and that wise smile of hers made him feel that she knew everything, had heard of his flight from his angry landlord, had heard of his preceding career, and had known how he had lain concealed the night before within the Sawtrell mansion. All of this seemed probable, looking into the face of Mammy to-day.

"I'm here trying to get a job," he said, "just as Sam Constant said."

Her long arms stretched forth, and she pointed to his hand. He raised it, wondering.

"Mistah Macready," she said, "you ain't done no work before!"

Bewildered, he stared down at his soft palm. Had she looked through the back of his hand? He was more startled and hopelessly at sea than before. The long story which he had framed of former places where he had worked, the long tale of misfortune and bad luck, withered away. It would be foolish to try to impose on Mammy. She would look through and through his fabrications at the first glance. He must tell another tale entirely, a briefer tale than the one he had planned, a tale nearer to the truth.

"Quite right," he said, "I'm simply down on my luck. I'm trying to work instead of starving!"

It was more than manifest that she did not entirely believe him. Her glance was not still for an instant. She was searching every line of his face, and there was much to read in him. Every hollow in that long, thin face had a meaning. Whether he were good or bad was not so patent, but plainly he was a force in one direction or the other.

Mammy Loftus was estimating him bit by bit, from his narrow and out-thrusting jaw to the peculiar good nature of his eyes.

"I knew you was a gentleman, Mistah Macready. It ain't so hard to tell. You-all got that look like they was a wall just ahead of you, and you was about to jump over it!"

She began to chuckle, nodding to herself, while the knitting needles flashed busily. And here a great black cat suddenly appeared from behind the chair, the largest cat Macready had ever seen. The big creature yawned and showed a great red mouth fringed with needlelike teeth. Then he stretched, digging his scimitar claws into the carpet. After that he rubbed his bristling back against the skirt of his mistress and then lay down at her feet, more like a dog than a cat. Presently he raised his head, and his big, round yellow eyes blazed with steady hostility at Macready, and from time to time the claws were thrust out with a quiver of the forearm, as though the strange beast were anticipating the pleasure of sinking them in the flesh of Macready himself!

In spite of himself Macready could not but turn his eyes away, and on the wall he saw the photographs of three children. One was an infant, one a fine-looking boy of fifteen, his face, however, marred by a narrowness across the eyes; and the third picture was of Madeleine, as she might have been some years before. There was no doubt that these were the Sawtrell children. The baby picture represented one who had died young; and the other two pictures were taken just when the remaining boy and girl wavered between childhood and maturity. He had already seen Madeleine. So he concentrated his attention on the face of the boy. It was a handsome face, he thought, but not at all resembling the girl. It was a head too narrow across the eyes, and the eyes themselves were too close together.

And all the time that he examined the room, he was making up his mind.

"I'll tell you the truth, Mammy," he said, suddenly smiling on her. "I'm not a groom; I've never worked around a stable one day in my life—for money. But I've always been near horses. I know them, and I can handle them. And just now I'm broke—flat busted, Mammy, and I have to live, you know. That's why I want to get this place."

There was an instant answer to his smile. She was nodding in good-natured understanding before he was half through his tale. But when he had ended she said: "I'll speak to Mistah Sawtrell, suh. I'll tell him just how it is."

But the glance with which she dismissed him made him understand somehow that she did not mean it. That night the word would come from the big house to the servants' quarters and to Sam Constant that the new groom was not wanted.

However there was no use to press the point. He had been answered, and he had been answered with unshakable finality. The staccato barking of a dog outside the house jerked sharply through his mind and made it impossible for him to think up a new maneuver. Now the great black cat jumped to the window sill and walked back and forth with back arched, tail wagging, and hair on end. He was no longer watching Macready, but gave his whole attention to the dog in the yard below. And Macready, try as he would, could not keep anything in his head but the sight of the cat and the yowling of the dog. So he rose in despair, said good-by to Mammy, and went slowly out. As he went, he wondered why it was that he was so sure. And yet he was as certain as though the negress had told him in words.

Obviously he had failed in his high

hopes of getting peaceably into the Sawtrell establishment, and this meant that, if he wanted to continue on that trail of mystery which was so irresistibly fascinating to him, he must lurk around and from the outside make visitations by stealth to learn what he could. It was not an inviting prospect. It might have daunted a professional, and certainly it spelled sure failure for an amateur.

There was just a ghost of a chance that Sam Constant might be able to do something by a direct appeal to Sawtrell himself. But something assured Macready that this was a ghost of a hope, indeed. No power could reach past the decision of Mammy in that household.

He sauntered disconsolately down the steps; at the bottom he paused and, with melancholy eyes, watched the dog. It was a young bull terrier going into an ecstasy of desire, as it saw the cat pacing to and fro on the window sill above it. Its very eyes watered with the intensity of its eagerness to sink those crushing teeth into the furry creature. One crunch, and the ribs of the cat would be ground to powder.

Macready looked on with a smile. He loved a bull terrier above all creatures, a dog that combined with inexhaustible fighting patience a readiness to die for a purpose. He looked up to the black cat. The latter was the veritable embodiment of evil, a witch plotting mischief. Its yellow eyes rolled and glared. It's hair was on end, and a specially furious rattle of barking made it lift a paw and make tentative stabs into the air, with unsheathed claws.

Yet the cat stayed on the window sill, as though it loved to look on and taste danger in prospect. It knew that a single slip would cast it down where the teeth of that killer would snap and crush its life; and still it could not go back to safety. It might be said that a frontier spirit was in that cat.

Another daring thought now came to the black monster in the window, so it seemed. Macready, fascinated by the little drama, watched the cat lower its nose, lashing its tail violently against its sides. It seemed to be hunting for the best spot to land when it jumped down to the ground. The terrier crouched, quivering in silent joy at the thought, then broke into a shrieking of delight, bounding up as high as he could leap to show his welcome for the new idea.

But the ground was not the destiny of the cat. When it jumped, it merely landed on a narrow little ledge, a foot below the window sill. Macready shook his head in admiration. The purpose of "Tom" was simply to play with death! Now the terrier, as it leaped, could get its nose almost within an inch of the ledge and the cat upon the ledge. Twice it sprang, and twice, with wonderful speed of paw, Tom sliced his claws across the tender nose of the dog. What could be said of the passion of the terrier now? His nose was crisscrossed with red. Tears of rage and battle fury filled his eyes. His mouth drooled with the desire to set tooth in that morsel of deviltry just beyond his reach.

And now the cat began to walk along the ledge slowly, still lashing its sides with its tail, like a small tiger, as it paused now and then with the deadly forepaw lifted, as though to give its great enemy a promise and a threat. It came to the end of the ledge. Beyond was a gap; and beyond the gap there was a high stone wall. Suppose it could clear the gap and land on the top of that wall? Tom looked down at the ground. looked with mournful eagerness at the wall, then glared with furious detestation at the dog. Plainly there was not the slightest reason why it should attempt the leap. There was nothing to be gained by getting to the stone wall, except that the bull terrier would be the more annoyed thereby. But that was

end enough for Tom. Twice he measured the distance of the leap; twice he crouched; twice he relaxed his muscles and rose again, as though his better judgment told him that he could never succeed in his effort. And twice he spat devilishly down at the yelping dog.

For the third time he flattened himself against the stone, and his tail stopped lashing. His head was debased. Then he launched his body into the air and shot up and forward, with hind legs tucked back like the legs of a bird flying, and fore legs were stretched out to shorten the distance. Surely, it seemed, that effort would succeed. It was impossible to connect this animal with failure. It would be like attempting to see weakness in the devil himself.

But failure there was here! Tom struck the top of the wall, indeed, but he struck on the very edge of it. Had it been a place with a rough surface, all would have been well enough, but his claws slipped from the polished rock. The shock of his own driving weight had a certain rebound. He worked frantically, with a faint cry of terror, but down he went!

Down, down, and there was the great avenger gone into a passion of savage joy, grinning his big jaws wider, opening his red gullet!

There would not be a fight, that was certain. It was simply cat murder in the first degree. There was a cry from the window, a harsh, husky cry, and Macready knew that the negress was watching. Suddenly he began to wish with all his heart that the dog would hurry the job.

But there was still something in Tom. Providence had not gifted him with that perfect body for nothing. Within an eyelash of the waiting teeth, Tom cast himself out, pushing with all his feet against the stone down which he was sliding. He turned a somersault, regained his feet, and, with the terrier turned into a white streak launched straight at him, Tom bounded away. He had no time to spare. The dog was coming like a bullet. Speed could not save Tom. Only matchless agility might.

Going at full speed he suddenly stopped by driving his claws into the turf and throwing himself sideways. The impetus of greater bulk and greater speed swept the dog past. The murdering teeth clashed along the very back of Tom; but the black cat had gained one fifth of a second, and that fifth of a second gave him another precarious respite. He made for a young sapling, and with a leap he was among the branches.

But still he was not safe. It was a mere slip of a tree, and the weight of big Tom bent it far to the ground. The terrier, coming in like the villain in the play, bounded high and would have struck his mark this time, had not a puff of wind tossed the sapling up and carried Tom for an instant into safety. But it was only an instant. Another rush and Tom would be gone. Here the white knitting was cast out through the window, where Mammy Loftus was shrieking for help. And Macready wondered. He had not dreamed that she could be so fond of the life of any creature as she was of this great cat!

He ran in. It was not an easy thing to do. Of all the dog tribe, there is none which makes so furiously free of the person of man as the bull terrier. He meets a soft word with indifference, but he meets the raising of a club with a tigerish charge and a leap straight at the throat of a man. All of which Macready knew, and yet he ran straight in on the dog, with the coat which he had jerked off flying from one arm.

There was one chance in fifty that his first reach and grip would hold. The terrier rose at the cat. There was a frightened and desperate snarl from the latter. Then the fingers of Macready caught under the harness for the leash

which was arranged over the muscular shoulders of the dog. It was an armful of deviltry, thirty pounds of concentrated fighting weight that Tom had scooped out of the thin air. But, before those eager teeth could get into his flesh, Macready had doused his coat over the head of the little warrior, dashed the dog to the earth, and then fled with all his might for shelter!

He reached the door a few seconds before the terrier, and, as he slammed it in the face of the flying fury, he heard the negress crying with a half-sob in her voice: "Good Bobby! Oh, poor Master Bob!"

And Macready, setting his teeth with exultation, knew that as long as he chose to stay here, Mammy would see that he was kept. He had won a victory at the very last moment.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LAUGH IN THE DARKNESS.

NOTHING in the appearance of Sid Tompson distinguished him from the thousands of prosperous business men one sees daily in the streets of New York. He was a distinguished detective, but he called himself and thought of himself as a business man. His business happened to be the detection of crime. And he took pride in his appearance as a business man. He was a chunky, broad-faced, determined-looking fellow. He looked like one who had his card index at his finger tips and could extract any information he wanted at a moment's notice. He spent a good deal of money on sober clothes of conservative cut. He suffered from one temptation, which was the desire to wear flashy stickpins and at least one ponderous ring. But he fought away that temptation as he would have shunned the voice of the devil. In short, he strove to make himself in all things an average American business man.

Now, as he sat erect in his chair, he secretly despised the nervousness which kept Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell pacing back and forth through his room.

"You'll have that room next to mine," said Sawtrell. "You'll find it comfortable. I've let Mrs. Sawtrell know that I have to have a secretary here at the house. It will be necessary for you to work at a typewriter a good deal during the day. Can you make it sound as though you were a professional?"

Tompson swallowed his smile.

"I can," he said.

"And if there were some notes in shorthand lying about—— But I suppose you will manage all that?" queried the millionaire plaintively.

Tompson kept silent. It was his habit to say nothing unless an answer were absolutely necessary. For he felt that silent men were strong men.

"And do you think anything will come out of this?" pleaded Sawtrell. "Do you think it will take long to get at the bottom of this horrible mystery?"

"I don't know," said Tompson.

"But, hang it, man, you surely must have some idea about similar cases."

"All cases are new cases," said Tompson dryly.

He made it a standard principle never to cringe to a client, never to soothe them with flattering hopes. He loved to come suddenly forth with his collected evidence in one hand and the criminal in the other, so to speak. Actions, he felt, were by great odds louder than the loudest words!

Sawtrell sighed, then recollected himself and brought in his chin and swelled out his chest.

"My personal suspicions——" he began.

He paused, but the detective said not a word, stirred not in his chair, made no move toward adding this statement to his notes, indicated by no glimmer of the eye the slightest pleasure. One might have thought that he had not the

slightest care what the personl opinions of Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell might be!

"But never mind what I think," went on Sawtrell hurriedly. "The first thing is, what information do you need that I can give you? Suppose we start out with a walk around the grounds, while I point out——"

"I have a map of the grounds."

"The devil you have! Then I can be of some help by giving you an account of the servants."

"I have pictures and descriptions of them all."

Sawtrell stopped in his eager pacing.

"How in the world did you manage that?" he gasped.

It was one of those questions which do not absolutely need an answer, and accordingly Tompson simply replied: "There's one exception, the new groom, Macready. I know all the rest."

"Ah, Macready!" said Sawtrell. "You don't need to bother about him. Between you and me—between you and me"—and here he approached closer to the detective and lowered his voice almost to a whisper—"I think that young man is a gentleman, down on his luck and flat broke!" He laughed. "He works for me, of course, but he has little to do. Works schooling horses. Rides like a winged angel, Tompson. My best horse, Whimsy, had the temper of a fiend, but Macready has made him manageable Rare man, I swear——"

Suddenly he recalled himself. It was foolish to speak of horses to a man hunter. Sawtrell even blushed.

"You need pay no attention to Macready," he said sharply. "I'll vouch for him! Perfect gentleman, Tompson."

Again there was no answer. Tompson was parrying the need of reply by countering with another question on a different topic.

"Three children have been born to Mrs. Sawtrell," he stated. "You were married thirty years ago. There was no offspring for three years."

"Three black, black years," said Sawtrell, sighing at the memory.

"Then a son was born and named Charles Edward Sawtrell."

"He died in his twenty-second month," said Sawtrell with emotion. "He was my image, Tompson—the very image of me! When he died—something died in me, Tompson—something died in me!"

Sawtrell went hastily to the window, as though to quiet himself by a breath of the chill fresh air which was pouring into the room, and, since his back was turned, Tompson indulged himself in a faint, contemptuous smile. Grief, he had always felt, was most unbusinesslike. For his own part he never indulged himself!

"There's Macready now!" he exclaimed. "Come look at him, Tompson. Very pretty, eh? By the Lord, a wizard with a horse!"

Tompson came to the window. He saw a slenderly built man in a field at a little distance, taking a young chestnut mare flying over the fences. Near him rode a girl with the sun flashing on the bright hair which fluttered from beneath her hat.

"And Madeleine with him," said Sawtrell. "She says that she has learned more from him in the last seven days than she's learned about horses in all her life before!"

"She seems cheerful enough—at a distance," said Tompson, more to himself than to the master of the house.

"Oh, she's not the same person, though!" exclaimed Sawtrell. "She's changing every day. She——"

His voice had risen and was trembling with emotion.

"Very well," said Tompson dryly, and his dryness checked the outpouring of the Sawtrell emotions. "After the death of the first child, Charles Edward"—Sawtrell shuddered—"after the

lapse of a year, a second son was born and named Joseph Jefferson, junior."

"More his mother's than his father's son," said Sawtrell hastily. "I mean he had her features."

"Joseph Sawtrell, junior," said the detective patiently, "was led astray."

"Exactly! Exactly!" cried Sawtrell. "Not an ounce of evil in the poor lad's head at first. But—bad companions——"

His voice trailed sadly away.

"Between fifteen and twenty he three times quarreled with you, was sent away from home three times, three times was involved in bad—er—scrapes, and three times he was taken back by you."

"How do you know all this?" said Sawtrell faintly, quite forgetting his dignity.

"Mr. Sawtrell," said Tompson, frowning, "you forget I have been on this case four days! I say the fourth time he left home after a quarrel, and this time he did not return. He was suspected of the murder of John Taylor in Elizabeth, and——"

"It was too much," said Sawtrell hastily. "When he jumped his bail it was too much. I disinherited him. There was nothing else for me to do. I could not have the name of Madeleine besmirched by the association of a scapegrace."

"Joseph Sawtrell, junior," said Tompson, "disappeared. The most careful search failed to locate him for three years. Then he was found in England. He disappeared again. A year later he was located in Vienna. He disappeared again and has not been seen from that date."

Sawtrell bowed his head in acquiescence.

"Which leaves Madeleine Sawtrell, born three years after the birth of Joseph. She is now the sole heir!"

"And something is happening to her," said Sawtrell. "What it is, Heaven alone knows! Mind you, you are here to discover who murdered young Duncan, if you can; but I have my own theory about Duncan's killing. He had quarreled with Madeleine that evening. He came back in the night to try to see her. Beneath her window he encountered by accident that same prowler who had been seen at the library window earlier in the evening. The prowler was simply a robber trying to get into the house, and he disposed of Duncan with two bullets. So much for poor Duncan; but this change which has come over Madeleine——"

"Grief for Duncan?"

"No; something had already happened in her mind. She had already refused Duncan. Besides, her affair with Duncan was not a real love affair. It was a marriage which I was arranging. You under tand? No, she is not grieving for poor John. But something else is wasting her away. It is the thing which in the first place made her refuse Duncan; it is some sickness of the mind, Tompson, and if you find it, I'll make you remember my gratitude."

He spoke with a thrill of the most solemn emotion, and even Tompson was touched. The detective lifted his head and looked afar. One could not tell when one dealt with a multimillionaire. It might mean a check for five thousand, or ten thousand. And were there not cases where twenty thousand dollars had been paid to an investigator?

Even the hardy spirit of Tompson possessed some weakness. What wonder if during the rest of that day some dreams invaded his mind? What wonder if he saw ten or twenty thousand dollars well invested in the Street according to the inside tips of great manipulators? What wonder if his imagination stalked forward by great steps? He spent several hours of that day arranging the personal library of Mr. Sawtrell; but it was with his subconscious mind that he worked. His no-

bler part was dreaming far in the future.

It was not until sunset that he awakened with a start to the realization that he was in this house for something other than dreams. And, with a shiver of self-scorn and a mental resolve never to submit to such weakness again, he left the house immediately after dinner and went for a stroll through the grounds. He did not go far, however. He sat down on a stone bench under a big tree, halfway between the rear of the mansion and the servants' house. There in the darkness he watched the rays of light breaking from windows here and there, striking among the trees, and then melting into the farther night. He was arranging his thoughts about this case.

Many things which he might have used as clews to be followed were absent. There were no new servants, for instance, except this Macready, who was reported by the master of the house to be a gentleman in disguise. As for the killing of Duncan, he did not worry about that case. He would far rather have had that to handle. There, at least, was a concrete difficulty which was to be dealt with. However there were other powers of the law busily at work to get at the truth in the Duncan case, although the accepted theory of the district attorney was that which Sawtrell had voiced a short time before. And, in the meantime, Tompson was left face to face with the disagreeable necessity of finding a secret hidden away in the mind of a girl! And he had always held that girls have no minds!

Some one stepped from the door of the servants' quarters. As he crossed a shaft of light from a window, the detective saw that it was Macready. At a noise behind him, Macready stopped, as though a gun had been shoved under his nose. He waited for a moment, looking cautiously around, then he turned sharply to the left and disappeared at once into the darkness of the trees—disappeared with a noiseless step of stealth.

And this was the Macready of whom Sawtrell had declared that Tompson need have no care! This was the gentleman for whom Sawtrell was willing to vouch as for himself! Tompson laughed savagely and silently in the darkness. Then he rose and started in pursuit.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN WITH THE LIGHT.

THERE was one thing, Tompson recalled, which had completely diverted all attention from Macready as a possible suspect. It was *after* the killing of Duncan that he had applied for work on the place. But it occurred to him now that it might have been the resource of a very wily criminal to seek refuge by actually going to live and settle down in the place where he had committed his crime. It was a new wrinkle, so far as Tompson could recall. Such a feature as this might help to make his work on this case stand out and help to give him a more solid reputation than ever. And, as he stepped into the trees, he began to wonder how he would shift his report around. It would never do to let any one suspect that he had picked up the trail of Macready, while he was sitting idly on a bench under a tree in the darkness. He must make it appear that a kind of foreknowledge had made him connect Macready with the crime—a sort of forward leaping of the mind from the slightest clew.

He smiled with savage satisfaction at the thought. But, in the meantime, he was entering a thick grove, and it was necessary for him to give all his attention to making a silent progress.

Presently, as he came to the edge of an open space and a plot of lawn, he saw a figure loom out of the darkness just ahead of him. He stopped. It was too late to dodge behind anything. He

simply pressed his back to a small tree in the hopes that his movelessness would take all suspicion from his head. In the meantime the other man was coming rapidly ahead, with a long and easy stride. And, even in the blackness of the night and the shadow of the trees, Tompson was able to recognize Macready by the long-visored cap which he wore pulled down over his face. It was Macready, then, who had turned sharply to the right after entering the woods near the house.

As Macready passed on, Tompson took a step in pursuit, and his foot fell on a twig which snapped under his weight! Macready stopped, whirled, and flattened himself against the ground, literally melting out of sight, a shadow merged with other shadows. Tompson did not move. Then there was a bright flash of light. It darted from Macready's place on the ground and plunged among the trees on the farther side of the plot of lawn. It swept to the left, the narrow ray of light cutting across the black tree trunks rapidly. When it swept to Tompson it would stop, and then might not a bullet come crashing down the channel of the light and into his body? He reached for his own gun, but the weapon was caught by a thread. Before he could leap away to shelter, the light had gone on again. The flash and sweep of the light were not tried again, and Tompson, breathing more easily, understood. Macready had thought that the sound came from his left and before him, instead of to his right and behind. That one saber sweep of the electric flash was all he ventured on. Now he was convinced that there was no pursuer. He rose and went on, and Tompson, now walking with the caution of a great stalking cat, moved in pursuit.

There had been room for many doubts before. Macready might have been supposed to be starting forth on the most innocent journey through the night, though his manner of entering the woods had hinted at something more. But, since this episode of the flash light, it was folly to doubt that he was bent on some sort of guilty work, and that he would protect himself from espionage by violence, if that were necessary. Tompson had only to recall the steady, straight-looking eyes and the long fighting jaw of the other to know that he was dealing with a worthy foeman. But still he must wait, though he felt that he was on the right trail certainly. He must wait and watch and see if the trail of this man would not lead at last to the proofs of his crimes.

This present trail turned suddenly to the right again and ran straight into the side of the house. As he drew nearer, he saw the lithe figure of Macready dimly outlined against the house, as he worked his way up the big trunk of the climbing vine. And above him was the balcony which lay beneath the windows of Madeleine!

Even the calm nerves of Tompson were shaken with excitement. He saw himself solving the entire mystery and making his arrest. Here was the very place where Duncan had fallen with two bullets in his body. To make a capture on the very spot——

But he brushed these fond hopes aside. There was too much work immediately before him. From the house came the tinkle of a piano, flashes and breaks of music beating out against the voice of the wind which was rapidly rising and drowned most of the piece. And against the shade of the nearest window of the music room fell the shadow of the girl at the piano. Madeleine was there, and in her room was Macready!

For he had stopped in his ascent at her windows, and through one of them he now disappeared. Instantly Tompson followed. Up the same vine he clambered with labor far greater than

that of the slender Macready. He reached the balcony. Cautiously he drew himself onto it, and, crouched at the window, he peered into the room.

Macready had crossed to the farther side, and now he was busy with his flash. The very first thing it fell upon, so far as Tompson could see, was a little jewel box on top of a dresser. It was open. There was a blur of many colors, a flash of crystals, but upon this box the flash light did not dwell, and Tompson breathed a sigh of relief.

For it had just come into his head that this expedition of the "gentleman" might be merely for plunder. This possibility was now removed. He must be there for another reason, and the heart of Tompson pounded with joy.

Now the flash light dropped down, and the small, keen circle centered upon the lower right-hand drawer of the dresser. There it hung, while the intruder opened the drawer and scanned the contents of it. What he examined seemed to take him only a moment. Then he drew out a framed picture. Tompson, bewildered, stared closely. So far as he could see, it was simply a page torn out of a magazine, a page showing a girl in an old-fashioned riding costume standing at the head of a big horse. It was bound with a cheap wooden frame, painted brown.

Yet this commonplace old picture seemed to fascinate Macready. He held the flash light directly over it and dropped to one knee. Now he studied it with the most profound attention. And, as Tompson watched and wondered, it occurred to him that it was indeed strange that such a picture should be carefully kept by such a girl as Madeleine Sawtrell. Yonder the glow from the flash light caught at the rich colors of an oil painting; but in the privacy of her dresser she kept this strange magazine photograph.

Now Macready replaced the photograph and closed the drawer of the dresser. In another moment he would start for the window, no doubt, and the detective hesitated. Nothing could be easier, now, than to bring Macready up sharp with a gun held under his chin, as he started through the window. But was Tompson ready to make his arrest so soon. He could jail his man on a charge of illegal entrance, but for purposes of theft Macready had certainly not come to that room. Otherwise the jewels, which had been exposed on the dresser with such criminal carelessness, must certainly have been pocketed first.

Indeed the fact that the jewels had not been touched, gave a new interest to this "gentleman's" character. Certainly by his manner of approach and by his manner of entrance to the room he had proved that he went there to steal something. It was not to steal things of concrete value. It was not to steal that shabby old photograph at which he had stared with such an intense interest. Then it must have been that he had gone there to steal information! And what would he expect to gain from that information?

The mind of honest Tompson was beginning to whirl. But it seemed better to him to let the matter slide for the moment. Macready felt himself a free agent. And, if Tompson watched him closely, surely Macready would lead Tompson to some greater and more startling details.

It was necessary to act quickly. The rising roar of the wind would cover small sounds. Tompson tumbled over the edge of the balcony and went down to the ground with the agility of a sailor. He skirted to the left, running as low to the ground as he could. He trusted that Macready would not come swiftly out of the room and spy the skulking form!

He reached the shelter of a semicircular little grove of saplings in the center of which was a boarded-over well-head. Then he looked back. No, there was no danger. Macready was only

just now coming through the window. He went over the edge of the balcony and came down to the ground with the same monkeylike agility with which he had climbed. He reached the garden sod. He went off with a light, long step, his head high in the air, and, even through the darkness, the detective could tell that the air of Macready was the air of a conqueror. Whatever he had gone to the girl's room to find, he seemed to have found it; or, at least, he had found enough to make him elated.

It must lie then inside the frame of that time-yellowed old photograph! And what could it be? All that was professional in the make-up of Tompson rose to the occasion! His heart boiled with enthusiasm. This was a mystery indeed! The killing of Duncan, the melancholy of Madeleine Sawtrell—all of these were insignificant things! There was some great thing in the background, dimly shadowed forth. That thing he must find. He watched Macready fade into the darkness. But from this time forth Tompson would turn himself into the very shadow of Macready! That trail would lead him to what he wanted!

Thoughtfully he turned back through the trees, lost in his thoughts, and presently his shin struck against the projecting upper edge of the cap of the covered well. Tompson paused to rub his shin, then straightened again; but, before he had time to take another step, the strangest thing which had as yet happened in all his active life, occurred to him.

From behind a tree directly in front of him a light, which seemed to him to have the strength of a dozen ordinary pocket electric lanterns, was flashed full in his face, a blinding and dazzling thing. He recoiled from the blow of that light. Then his revolver in his hand, he stared around him into the night; but after that instant's flash the light had gone out. He ran straight ahead, but, after being dazzled, he was like a man without eyes in the shadow of the trees. He ran into a tree trunk, and he stopped with a sickening jar. Somewhere in the distance he heard a sound like a muffled chuckling. Some one was bursting with exultation.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE HOLLOW.

WHAT Macready had seen that night had been only the photograph, and it had bewildered him as much as it had bewildered Tompson. The picture had been that of a pretty girl, perhaps twenty years old. She wore the costume of some twenty years before, with a riding habit rather bunchy at the shoulders and pinched at the waist, but she was a wonderfully pretty girl. Even the cheap paper which time had yellowed and stained could not disguise her looks. There was a strange freshness to her smile and a gleam to her eyes which made all else in the frame of the photograph real. And there was something delightful in her slender grace, perfectly set off by the stalwart bulk of the big gray horse beside which she stood.

But why this picture should be a treasured secret of Madeleine Sawtrell was increasingly amazing!

He went through the window, down the climbing vine to the ground, and back to his quarters. He found old Sam Constant waiting to bore him with another installment of the tale of his life. For it was a rule Sam never broke. When a new man was added to his staff, the heart of Sam Constant overflowed, and he found it necessary to tell all that he knew about himself to the newcomer. He revealed all that he knew of himself and his adventures. Just as he was glad to know about the pedigree of a horse, so he was perfectly willing to let any man know who he was, and from what he came. And the

remarkable part of it was that he did not at all demand that his frankness about himself should be met with similar frankness from his listeners. It was a bad bargain of which he freely took the worst end. This night he kept Macready smiling and nodding automatically for an hour, while Macready's mind wandered far off into other fields. But at length the old horseman retired and left Macready alone.

Macready was bitterly discontented with himself. Since that lucky moment when he had saved the black cat from the teeth of the terrier and thrown away a perfectly good coat to win the favor of an old negress, he had had reason to feel that she must be omnipotent on the Sawtrell place, indeed. He would never forget how she had come out to him in the hall with the black cat, still with hair on end, in her arms. He would never forget how she had thanked him.

"I must be getting sort of old, Mistah Macready," she told him. "I sure enough didn't know that you was such good luck when I first seen you!"

And like good luck he had been welcomed from that moment. The next day he was called in to see Sawtrell himself, and the result of that interview was that he was made a sort of assistant and lieutenant to Sam Constant. His duties were light. He had none of the drudgery about the stables. He schooled the middleweight and heavyweight hunters over the jumps. He took a daily work-out on Whimsy to subdue still further the tricky temper of that horse, and prepare him for the big point-to-point race, in which Sawtrell himself was to ride Whimsy! But aside from a few turns in the saddle every day, Macready was allowed to spend his time as he pleased, and he was given a stout-hearted old bay gelding to hack about the country. It was an ideal place. Sam Constant was as pleasant a fellow as one could wish to have near; there was no friction in any direction; the ominous face of Mammy Loftus was wreathed in smiles whenever he came near her. And yet in spite of all these things, Macready was bitterly disappointed.

For he had not yet made the slightest progress along the trail of mysteries which led to a final explanation of that strange scene which he had overlooked in the room of Madeleine on the first night he had entered the Sawtrell house. He sat up late that night conning his problem back and forth and trying vainly to piece together a bit of information here and a guess there. There was no hope. He could make no headway, and he went to bed that night and dreamed of riding hard downhill on pleasant roads and finding them chopped suddenly off with great stone walls.

Early the next morning he was awakened by a buzz of excitement running through the establishment. Before he was dressed and shaved he had heard fragments here and there. A little later he heard the story in full.

One more had been added to the list of the strange happenings in the Sawtrell place. That morning the big safe in the library had been found opened and ten thousand dollars had been taken out—a package of bills which was always kept in cash on the estate. The combination had been worked. It was a safe of the newest and the safest make. It seemed impossible that any one could have gained the information as to that combination; it was still more absurd to dream that some stage villain had solved the combination by the dexterous touch and the acute ear. And yet the combination was known only to Mr. Sawtrell and to no other person!

Certainly he could not have robbed himself, but here was the safe wide and the money gone! And there was not a trace of the criminal, high nor low! There was a rumble of dread which passed echoing through the establishment.

"It ain't natural, and it ain't right," Macready heard the head gardener say. "There's too much happening in this house to suit me, and I'm going to give notice to-day. I dunno what's behind it all, but I ain't none too curious, neither. I'll take my time and just go along!"

This opinion, not quite so strongly expressed, was shared by others. There was something decidedly wrong in the house of Sawtrell. A murder, a robbery, a mistress prostrated with nervousness, and her daughter changed almost beyond recognition—it was too much!

And changed Madeleine certainly was! Macready, who watched her like a shadow, saw her come out to the stables before midmorning, and all the bloom was gone from her cheek, all the sprightliness was gone from her step. She walked slowly, heavily, with her head bowed a little toward the ground. She was a very picture of one who had been bowed by a terrible grief. Her pale, sad face and her shadowed eyes worked strangely on the men at the stable.

"She ain't long for this earth," said Sam Constant, shaking his head, as he stood in the great arched door of the stable and watched the girl ride away. "I've seen it happen before. I've seen 'em pass into a decline like that. There ain't no use trying to stop it. They just wither and die."

"What stupid nonsense!" cried Macready. And, when Constant turned to him, amazed, Macready strode past and flung himself onto the back of his bay gelding and cantered away.

He turned in a direction opposite from that which the girl had taken. But once he was well into the trees, he made a sweeping detour and cut back across her track; but she was not in sight. Plainly she must have sharply increased the pace of her horse as soon as she was out of sight of the stable. He spurred his honest gelding into a run and whipped swiftly over a mile of going before he caught a glimpse of her again.

She bobbed out of sight over a hill. He followed across country, taking the fences easily, with his long-legged jumper. He shot up the farther slope and was hurtling over the top of the hill when he saw that Madeleine had halted her mount in the hollow beyond. There, not a quarter of a mile away, she was pacing her mount restlessly up and down. Two things saved Macready from being observed. One was that Madeleine was walking her horse away, her back turned to him at that moment. The next thing was that a strong morning wind was curling among the leafless trees and keeping up a song of volume sufficient to drown all ordinary sounds.

Macready twitched his horse around, rushed him back behind a lofty outcropping of rocks, and then dismounted. He went forward to the brow of the hill. There he lay buried in some low shrubs and peered down into the hollow, a thoroughly screened spectator of whatever might take place there. As for his expectation, he did not know what to think. Perhaps she had checked her horse here, as some gloomy thought came to her; and again, perhaps, she had come here to wait for some other by appointment.

He had not long to stay there before he discovered that the second thought was the better of the two. Presently a man appeared on foot at the brim of the hill beyond the hollow and signaled to Madeleine with a whistle and a wave of the hand. And she in turn waved joyously back.

What a change came over her all in a moment! From a drooping position in the saddle she became suddenly erect. She sent her horse into a gallop toward the newcomer, while he came leisurely down the slope to meet her.

With a savage heart Macready

watched him. He was a small and dapper fellow, this one with whom Madeleine was keeping her appointment. He wore a tuft of mustache, very black and jaunty, and a tight suit. And in his rather mincing walk, in his whole manner, there was something so foreign that Macready put him down instantly as a Frenchman.

And Madeleine loved him!

For now she had thrown herself from her horse and had fallen into the arms of the other. And Macready, with a peculiar anguish of heart, watched the stranger kiss her. For even a penniless groom in the stables will form hopes which are never bodied forth in words!

This was the meaning, then, of all that he had heard and seen. This was the meaning! It was on account of this fellow that she had broken her engagement with John Duncan. It was on account of this man that she had been heartbroken. But why should she meet him in such clandestine fashion? She was either ashamed to acknowledge her feeling for the man, or else there was some other more profound reason. She was already married, perhaps!

When that thought came to him, Macready was convinced that he had looked to the very bottom of the puzzle. This must be the explanation! She dreaded lest the world should know of this husband, and Macready, sick at heart, buried his face in his hands. But at least he had discovered a thing which removed her from his attention. He felt that he would have died ten times to have snapped the link that bound her to this fellow. He prepared to rise and return to the house—and thence on again down that long road of the unknown to-morrows. But when he looked up again he saw something in the hollow which made him forget all that he had been thinking of. For he saw the stranger take a wallet from the hands of Madeleine—saw him take from the wallet a tightly pressed-together wad of greenbacks, and saw him shake the money above his head!

CHAPTER XI.

THE TATTERED GREENBACK.

IT meant so much to the fierce heart of Macready that he could neither stir nor think for a moment. Such was the joy of the man of the black mustache to have the money, that the wind snatched one of the bills from his brandished hand. It fluttered away and tangled on a twig, high up in a near-by tree. The stranger moved as though to follow and climb the tree. But presently he tossed out his arms, as though to declare that, with his present abundance, he need pay no heed to trifles that were lost from the whole.

And in the meantime he turned back to Madeleine, laughing. He was very handsome, but it was not the type of good looks that Macready liked to see in a man. There was too much of the fox about him to please such a grim-handed fighter as Macready. Nevertheless he could see that a woman might consider the man very handsome indeed.

Yet the thought that such a fellow could have stolen the heart of Madeleine Sawtrell infuriated Macready, made him ready to kill with his bare hands. It was like seeing hostile troops on American soil!

But how much meaning was crowded into the five seconds during which the money changed hands! It meant that this man was base enough to take money from the woman he loved, and of all baseness it seemed to Macready that this was the lowest form. It meant, furthermore, that Madeleine herself was the thief who had first stolen the combination of her father's safe and then taken ten thousand dollars from the inside. It meant that all her relations with this man dripped with shame and guilt.

Macready went slowly back to his

horse, mounted, and rode away. If he had come away with the guilt of murder on him, he could not have bowed his head more gloomily. The two pictures came like fire across his mind—Madeleine the picture of all that was purest and most beautiful, and this dark-faced, handsome rat of a man who accepted the stolen money from her hands!

But he must make sure that it was indeed the stolen money. He had covered half a mile of the return journey. Now he turned the head of his horse and returned cautiously to the hollow. But it was empty. The man was gone, and Madeleine was gone, also. Macready rode down to the tree and there, high aloft, he saw the green back, already being worn to tatters by the whipping of the wind. And Macready was instantly in the branches of the tree. It meant a hazardous climb out among the outer branches, but finally he disentangled the bill.

And it was proof enough and to spare. More than half of the paper had been torn or chafed away, as the branch thrashed among the other branches, with the wind swaying it. But in one corner of the fragment which remained there was the figure "100." It was a hundred-dollar bill, and it was of bills of that denomination that the lost money of Sawtrell consisted. If there had been a shadow of a doubt, it was now gone.

Then, in the moment of gloomy triumph, Macready heard a sound of hoofs, looked out from among the thinly screening branches, and saw Madeleine come galloping over the brow of the hill. She came straight toward the tree, caught sight of him in the branches, and stopped her horse, with a sharp exclamation of fear and surprise. She even followed her first impulse enough to turn her mount half round. But apparently she saw at once that it was useless to flee—it only made whatever surety Macready might have, doubly sure. Now she slowly brought her horse on again, and, by the time Macready reached the ground, she was sitting in the saddle only a few feet away, mortally pale, her lips compressed, her eyes fiery bright in the midst of shadows. Macready went sadly up to her. He could hardly recognize her, and yet it seemed to him that she was more beautiful than ever. He took off his hat, and he was grateful for the coolness of the autumn wind against his forehead.

"Mr. Macready!" she said.

"Yes?" said Macready.

"What are you doing here?"

He paused before he answered, staring up to her in a deepening wonder.

"I climbed the tree to look for an old nest," he said at last.

"A nest?" She raised her head, as though a sudden hope had come to her, and Macready, raising his head, also, saw gloomily that the branches were blown clean. There was not a shred of a nest in sight.

"A nest?" she echoed, looking down to him.

She was beginning to tremble, but, unlike other women, in spite of her trembling her voice remained steady.

"Mr. Macready," she said suddenly, "that is not true!"

"No," admitted Macready, "it is not!"

"Show me what you have found!" she commanded.

He drew it out of his pocket and extended it in the palm of his hand. There was a gasping breath drawn in by Madeleine.

"Let me see it," she said, reaching a gloved hand.

He closed his fingers over the fragment slowly.

"No," said Macready, "I can't do that. I am very sorry, but I can't do that."

She jerked out a little automatic pistol. Fast as her hand moved, Macready

recognized the make. It was a terrible little weapon which could be hidden under the palm of the hand of a man, but which, at the touch of a finger, loosed a shower of .32 caliber slugs—seven bullets in one flight—enough to rip a man in two. It did not need cleverness to hit the mark with such a weapon. It was like shooting with a hose. And at any distance, up to thirty feet, every one of the bullets was entirely capable of killing.

Macready looked gravely into the black muzzle of that tiny gun, and he noted that the muzzle was as steady as though it rested upon rock. All the rest of the girl's body seemed to be convulsed with fear, but her hand was steady, her aim was true. And, though her face was white, and her lips trembled, her eyes blazed with fiery resolution.

"Mr. Macready," she was commanding him, "give it to me!"

He pushed his hand to the edge of his coat pocket, and all the while he stared curiously up into her great eyes. It was such a test as all his wild life had never brought him, and in that moment of time Macready knew that, if he could not have her, he did not care whether he lived or died. And he knew, as he watched her, that, no matter how time or sickness changed her, his love would never change. And he knew that, no matter of what sins she had been guilty, his love would never be tainted.

"Do you hear me?" she cried in that strangely level and strong voice.

"I hear you."

"I swear that I mean what I say! It is worth life or death to me, Mr. Macready!"

Macready smiled at her.

"I believe you," he said.

"Then God have mercy on you—and on me!" cried Madeleine, and, as she swayed a little toward him, he steeled himself with set teeth for the shock which would wash him out of this life into eternal darkness, perhaps, or into eternal light. A foolish wonder crowded through his brain. He had heard that men think of profound things in their last moments; but what he thought of most of all was the face of Madeleine, with the windy sky above and beyond her. And after that he wondered if he would hear the shot at all? For bullets outspeed sound.

The automatic slipped from her hand and fell like a glistening cupful of water. She had weakened at the very last! And now, with a moan of grief and of dread, she turned her horse and raced it up the slope, over the hill, and away.

Macready looked vaguely after her, and it seemed beyond belief that he had been rescued from certain death. And, as he looked around him past the naked brown branches and into the keen, deep blue of the sky; as he faced the sharp edge of the wind, and as he saw the honest head of his watching horse, it seemed to Macready that the battle could not be entirely lost. There must be something to do, some step to take which would give him another fighting chance.

He mounted again and rode slowly back toward the house. As he went, he decided on one thing. He would not keep the fragment of the bill. It would be a weapon over the head of the handsome Frenchman, if French he were indeed. But though nothing could have induced him to give it to Madeleine under compulsion, he felt that nothing could induce him to keep it from her so long as force were not used to get it from him.

And, as he went, he pondered the case of the stranger and Madeleine. What was there about the man that could make her love him so devoutly? It was a sudden attraction, beyond a doubt, for it had swept her from her feet. It had struck her down in the very midst of her affair with John Duncan. One day,

apparently, all had been well with her; the next day she was distraught.

John Duncan was dead. Perhaps he was dead because he might have interfered with her love for this stranger. Perhaps the Frenchman himself had been the hand which slew poor Duncan?

And what a wild love was this which made a girl so proud as Madeleine still worship a knave low enough to take charity from her! It made Macready gasp in wonder; it made him grind his teeth with rage! And, as he sent the gelding into a harder gallop, he raised his head and told his listening conscience that, if the chance ever afforded, and he were alone with the Frenchman, one of them would die!

When he reached the stable again he managed to start whistling. He alighted in the best good humor which he could sham. At once he found out Sam Constant whom he found in the stall of the little brown mare, "Miss Constance," delivering to a stable boy a profound dissertation on scratches. He merely waved at Macready to show that he harbored no grudge. Then Macready went on toward the house.

He found Elsie, the maid, who divided her time between Mrs. Sawtrell and Madeleine, and from her he learned that Madeleine had just come in and was probably in her room. Macready went upstairs immediately. He reached the door of her room, folded the fragment of the bill in a slip of paper, and passed it through the crack beneath the door. Then he gave two sharp knocks at the door and hurried away down the hall and the back stairs. He was met by Elsie below.

"You mustn't go gadding around the house like this," she reproved him, "unless you're sent for."

"It's a secret for Miss Madeleine—she understands," said Macready.

"But she's not upstairs," said Elsie. "She's not upstairs after all. She's in the music room."

Macready did not wait to hear any more. Indeed, he listened now to a stormy bit of Chopin which was being played by far-away keys. It was Madeleine, pouring out some of her despair and her excitement. In the meantime, suppose some other person were to enter that room and find the bill? Suppose——

But he shrugged the thought away. The rooms were cleaned and made up before this. To fear was foolish. No one but Madeleine would be apt to enter.

CHAPTER XII.

MANILA PAPER.

THE sight of his kodak on the table in the corner of his room, gave the idea to Tompson. Even so, he ordinarily would never have done the thing; but to-day he was desperate. To have worked for over a week on this case, and to have made only such insufficient progress as that glimpse he had had of Macready examining the picture in the girl's room, was bad enough; but to have had the house burglarized while he was in it, was too much for his mental equilibrium. In his desperation to make some headway, he determined to take the next long step.

What it might lead to, he could not guess. But he knew that he must have time to examine that picture in the drawer of the dressing table of Madeleine. Night is the time for stealthy work. Night had been the time chosen for his expedition by Macready. But Tompson decided that he would take opportunity by the forelock with a vengeance.

Morning had hardly well begun when he saw Madeleine cantering away beyond the screen of the naked trees of autumn, and, the instant he saw that, he caught up his kodak and hurried to the room of the girl. If he were discovered entering or leaving the room, most of all if he were found in it, he

could make no excuse; and though Sawtrell would, of course, be lenient, it would mean two things. First of all, if he wished to be kept on the case he would have to tell his employer that he suspected Madeleine, and why he suspected her. This was something he by no means wished to do. He could not trust the too voluble tongue of Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell. And, even if he were continued on the case, if he were discovered snooping about the girl's room, he could not continue in the house. He would have to operate from the outside, which would increase his difficulties tenfold. So it was most of all to be desired that this visit to Madeleine's room should be done with secrecy. And, as a desperate gambler will do, he took the long chance in the hope that he might surprise fate. For who would be on the outlook against marauders in midmorning, with the sun pouring in through every window?

Certainly luck favored his first steps in the adventure. No one was stirring through that hall. He knocked once at the door, received no answer, opened it, and boldly walked in. He looked around him with a scowl, but there was no one there.

There was an old-fashioned lock on the door. He threw the snap which fastened the lock, then went to work. Because he was excited he worked with the more deliberation, for that was his way. Into the center of the room he moved a chair, facing toward the window. Then he opened and set his kodak for the proper distance. Next he went to the dresser, opened the drawer, and took out the picture of that girl in the riding habit beside the gray horse. He placed it on the chair and focused the kodak on it, when he heard a light rustling sound, as of something moving among the silks in the closet to his left.

Perspiration poured out upon the forehead of Tompson. He strode to the closet and threw the door of it open. In that place, at least, there was no spy. No doubt it had been only a peculiar noise of the wind which he had heard.

But now came a sharp, heavy knock at the door. Tompson turned pale. He glanced out the window. Escape by that way was blocked. A lawnmower was purring down the long stretch of grass, rattling to a pause at a corner, and purring away again in a new direction. This man would be sure to see any one who ventured to get through the window and climb down. And to be seen was as bad as to be caught, for poor Tompson.

He moistened his white lips and looked to the door again. And it seemed to him, while he stared apprehensively, that footfalls were now retreating down the hall.

What could it mean? Then, like the bulldog that he was, he went on with the work which he had first undertaken. After he had photographed the picture, he returned the picture to its drawer, exactly as he had found it. He placed the chair in the exact spot from which he had taken it, and finally approached the door. It was useless to wait. At any moment some other person might come. He stood beside the door, with his ear pressed hard against the wood. But when he heard nothing he opened the door resolutely and in the hall faced —nothing!

Hastily he stepped through. One more step and he would be turned away from the door, and no one could be sure from what direction he had come; but, just as he started to close the door, he saw a little fold of yellow paper lying on the floor as though it had been slipped under. He stooped and scooped it up. Even if that delay were to have taken him to purgatory for ten thousand years, he could not have avoided picking up that tempting scrap.

Now he closed the door softly, for a sound might betray all! He stepped into the hall, and at that instant no other

person came around the first corner than Mammy Loftus, moving with her usual slow, feeble step, her big hands sweeping almost to her knees. To the detective she was as unwelcome as the face of the devil himself would have been. But, if only she would pass on without stopping him——

There was no such good luck. She paused and stopped him with a wag of her head.

"Things ain't the way they used to be," she said. "When I was a mite younger, folks that was earning a living didn't have no time to snoop around taking pictures."

Tompson started. What could the old black hag know? Then anger rushed into his mind. There was an ample quantity of the brute in Tompson. Some of it found expression now.

"When I was a mite younger," he said, "I was living in a part of the country where colored people weren't allowed to talk to white folks!"

Mammy Loftus removed her spectacles, and her bright little eyes gleamed out at him.

"Oh," she said, "is that the way it is with you, Mistah Tompson? Is that the way it is?" Then she brushed on past him with a strange smile on her face.

Tompson, still grinding his teeth, started on for his room. When he reached it, all of his anger had left him. In its place there was a sick fear which occupied the pit of his stomach. He was weak with it. For it seemed to him that the face of the old negress would never get out of his mind. It was stamped into the very vitals of his memory. Naturally he had made a thousand enemies in his career as a sleuth. But it seemed to Tompson that he would willingly balance the force of all of their enmities against the hate of this one feeble-bodied old negress, because her single danger would be greater than from all the rest.

He went to his little medicine kit which he always carried with him. From it he took a flask of brandy and drank off a stiff potion. It was not until the stuff had burned its way down to his stomach and sent a wave of hot blood singing through his head that he paused to consider how strange an effect the old creature had had on him. He rarely used liquor, saving as a needed stimulus. But he had needed that drink, he felt, fully as much as though he had been walking half the night in the face of a blizzard.

Putting away the flask in the kit he came back to the window. His brow was corrugated with anger and worry. It was the first time in five years that he had allowed his temper to get the best of him—when he was at work. When he was not on an assignment, it was an entirely different matter. There were ugly stories tucked away in the records about Private Detective Tompson. But none of those stories had to do with fits of temper while he was working at his business.

This was very bad. He had insulted the old woman unnecessarily. No matter what the provocation, it was madness to put into the lists against him the ruler of the household. One more step and she would grow suspicious of him. And once she was suspicious, a word from her would set every member of the household watching every step he took.

He cursed savagely under his breath and thrust his hands deep into his coat pockets. So doing, he touched the bit of paper which he had picked up. He took it out. It was cheap manila paper —such as a man might carry around with him for the purpose of jotting down addresses, if he did not care to be burdened with a little notebook. He opened the fold and inside found a tattered fragment of a greenback, and in one corner was the denomination—one hundred dollars! Tompson stepped to

a chair and sank into it, limp mentally and physically.

Last night ten thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills had been stolen from the safe of Joseph Sawtrell. This morning a slip of paper with a remnant of one of the bills—it was madness to doubt that this must be one of them—had been slipped under the door of Madeleine Sawtrell's room! This had made the rustling sound which he had heard when he was in the act of snapping his kodak the first time.

What could it possibly mean? The bill had been passed under the door for the girl, and there had been two raps on the door to call her attention, on the theory that she must be in the room. Then the messenger had fled. What did it mean? A promise? A threat? A message?

Under his magnifying glass he examined the bill, but he could find no trace of anything irregular about it. Nothing had been marked upon it that could convey any meaning to another person. He placed it back in the little fold of yellow paper and put the paper into his wallet and sat brooding.

He was beginning to feel that the whole affair was a hopeless jumble. Only one thing was certain. He was gathering the toils slowly, but certainly, around Madeleine Sawtrell, though what he would capture when he captured her he could not guess.

Presently he went downstairs and outside to draw a breath of fresh air. Behind the house he encountered Macready, crouched before a stalwart young bull terrier, which was held on a leash by one of the stable boys. He was striving earnestly and vainly, as it seemed, to make friends with the dog.

"'King Solomon' ain't going to forget," the boy was saying. "You watch out for yourself, if he ever gets a chance to nab you!"

Macready nodded with a grimace of concern.

"First dog that's ever hated me," he said with a laugh.

"Queer name for a dog," said Tompson. "I'd like to jot it down. Have either of you got a scrap of paper?"

"Here you are," said Macready and, without turning, took out a small pocket pad and detached a leaf of cheap manila paper!

CHAPTER XIII.

LOST ILLUSIONS.

ON so many occasions Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell frowned and seemed about to stamp and shake the world, that his household grew tired of waiting for the blow. And the result was that, when he finally decided to make trouble, no one was apt to take him seriously. He had finally given up all disagreements with his wife. For there was a better way. It was far smoother, far easier to get Mammy Loftus to one side and tell her what must be changed in Mrs. Sawtrell. For Mammy was a marvelous messenger. It seemed that there was nothing she could not get from her mistress. Moreover, during these altercations, she nearly always sided with the master of the house. This was the more flattering to Sawtrell because he well knew that the old negress would gladly have laid down her life to please Lady Cynthia. His own love for his wife had been so long cooled that he regarded the deathless affection of the negress with a peculiar awe.

But he had finally reached a point where, he felt, even the ministrations of Mammy Loftus were not enough. He must see his wife. He prepared for the interview by examining himself in the mirror. He roughened his hair a little. It seemed to him that it gave him a more imposing effect. It added half of a vital inch to his stature, and added height was very necessary when he stood before the lofty and gaunt form of "little Cynthia." Next he but-

toned his coat tightly, very much as though he were about to walk into the teeth of a heavy wind.

Then, taking a small glass of brandy, he decided that he was ready to face the ordeal. He had carefully chosen the time of his visit, and for it he had returned from his office a whole hour earlier than usual. He would take Mrs. Sawtrell at the hour just before dinner, when one's vitality is low, when one's nerves are unstrung, when the weight of the day lies most heavily on the mind. He determined to charge upon her at this most defenseless moment, and with the weight of his attack, his surprise, he would break her spirit and make her confess what the mystery was. He reviewed his plan as he went down the hall toward Mrs. Sawtrell's room. He reviewed it with such care as a general takes on the eve of battle. Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell decided that his scheme was worthy of himself. In fact he was so pleased with himself that he was almost put in the wrong countenance and had carefully to rearrange the gloom on his brow before he reached the apartment of his wife.

Mammy met him at the door and protested that Cynthia was dressing for dinner and could not possibly see him now.

"Nonsense," said Sawtrell. "Perfect nonsense!" He had planned every move, as has been said. Now he jerked out his gold watch and glanced at it. "I'll wait ten seconds in the hall, then I'll enter!" he declared firmly.

It was a delight to him to hear the gasp of Mammy Loftus. And he stood in the hall beaming down at the face of his watch until it had come to the end of the ten seconds. Then, as good as his word and sensing, as it seemed to him, a great rustling and bustling inside, he snapped the watch shut, dropped it into his pocket, and strode past the door.

He found Cynthia lying on a couch before the hearth. A fragrant log of cedar simmered and flared and poured forth sweetness on the fire. And the lady, wrapped in a loose dressing gown, was reclined on the couch in such a fashion that the yellowing firelight played softly across her features. She was so draped, moreover, that Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell saw none of those staring bones which had so often brought up thoughts of death in his gloomy mind. But for the moment, with the rosy reflection from the bright robe she was wearing falling on her face, little Cynthia was changed to a wax ghost of that beauty which he had once adored.

It was a stunning blow to him. It seemed that he was rushing in to strike down with the club of his brute anger this delicate creature. But his shame burned in him only for a moment. In the background was Mammy Loftus, bowed into a shadow which lived and trembled in that part of the room. And suddenly all that Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell could see was Mammy breathlessly at work under the directions of her mistress to arrange the details of the picture which was to impose on him. For it was a planned picture. Of that he could have no doubt. That hand dangling over the back of the couch, with the shadow disguising its famine leanness—that cunning inclination of the head, so as to keep her brooding, as it were, upon the fire without exposing the cords of her neck—these things were too deftly done not to have been the effect of art.

Two emotions darted through his heart. The first was a wild pang of joy and sorrow, as the last beauty of his dead romance rushed back upon him. The second was profound admiration for the cleverness of his wife in so swiftly disguising herself. He had to force the frown with which he spoke to her.

"I wish to speak to you alone, Cynthia."

"We are alone, Joseph," she answered. "There is only Mammy."

"Not even Mammy," he said. "I want to speak with you alone."

"Very well," said Cynthia, and Mammy brushed softly from the room. As she passed, Sawtrell thought that from the back she looked like a trembling old octogenarian on the verge of the grave. But at the door she turned and flashed on them a glance of piercing curiosity, and the pity left Sawtrell. He turned the key after the old negress. Then he went to his wife and stepped rudely between her and the fire.

"My dear Cynthia," he said, "I am sorry to say that I have come this evening to insist on knowing what actually happened the other evening. I have waited for some time. I have thought that you would surely come to tell me. But now I demand to know: What was it that Mammy whispered to you on the night that John Duncan was found murdered beside our house—what was it that Mammy whispered to you that stretched you on the floor in a faint?"

He had planned that speech carefully, with a sudden straightening of his body at the end and the pointing of a stiff arm at Mrs. Sawtrell. He had practiced it several times in the seclusion of his room, and now he was delighted to see that he had not struck in vain. Mrs. Sawtrell stared, erect upon the couch, and the pretty picture was ruined. The graceful lines of the draperies fell swiftly away into a daylight ugliness. All that was remembered was brushed aside, and he saw her as she was, a gaunt-throated and hollow-cheeked spectre of a woman—not the thinness of sickness, but a sort of withering away with the approach of years. The sneer formed on her lips, and the light gleamed in her eyes.

"What did she whisper?" asked Mrs. Sawtrell. "Nothing, Joseph—nothing that would at all interest you, dear Joseph!"

Sawtrell bit his lip. He was not prepared for such masculine strength of spirit. He recoiled from it. But Cynthia rapidly passed into another part. She broke into shrill laughter and sank back upon the couch. She threw her hands across her face, and in so doing the wide sleeves of her dressing gown fell back and exposed those gray and bony elbows and that withered arm.

"Oh, dear God in heaven!" moaned Cynthia. "There was never a woman tortured like me! There was never another——"

"Tortured? Tortured?" cried Sawtrell sharply. "I have tried to make you fairly comfortable. Now I come asking you a question which must be answered, and you try to put me off by crying out and sobbing and swearing that I am torturing you! But I shall not be put off, Cynthia!" He gathered force as he talked and struck his right hand into the palm of his left. "I say I shall not be put off. I shall have an answer before I leave this room!"

"On the dresser!" gasped Cynthia.

"What about the dresser?" he scowled.

"My salts——"

He hesitated. He half guessed that she was acting a part, and yet he was half relieved that she had not continued in the same virago strain in which she had at first answered him. He brought her the salts and allowed her to administer them herself.

"I am better now," she said faintly, letting her head fall back into the cushions and looking up to the ceiling. "My head whirls. What is it, dear Joe? What is it I must do for you?"

The plaintiveness touched him in spite of himself, but he forced himself to go on.

"You saw a face at the window, you said. But what is more certain is that Mammy told you something of importance. What was the thing she said? Cynthia, my dear, I must know!"

"I have forgotten—I don't know what you mean, Joe!"

At this he became iron. He took her hand in a hard grip.

"Cynthia," he said, "that is not true. And, by Heaven, I shall learn what the truth is! I haven't come here to be made a fool of!"

It seemed that he had touched a nerve that thrilled his wife into full life. The weakness, the languor which had possessed her, dropped away like the dropping of a veil, and the tigress sprang through from behind. She sprang to her feet and stood well above him, her bony hands clenched, the cords of her neck standing out in her fury, her eyes sparkling through their sunken shadows.

"Made a fool of?" she echoed. "How could I make a fool of *you?* You were born a fool, Joseph, and you'll die one. And, like the blindest fool of all, you don't understand that the world sees through you—the whole world sees you for what you are. The whole world keeps its face straight, while you're watching, and then smiles behind your back. Do you understand? We laugh at you behind your back."

On a torrent of her words she drove him before her, and Sawtrell shrank away until he stood in the center of the room, and still she followed him, making strange gestures, almost as though she were about to strike him, until, with the conclusion of her speech, the very violence of her insults seemed to give him new strength. He paused and stiffened, and his color turned to a mottled gray and purple. Indeed, she had struck him in a mortal place. With a spear-point she could not have touched him closer to the quick.

"You—you——"

He ran out of words. And when they came to him, alas, that Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell should have fallen on chatter out of the very gutter.

"You hag!" cried he. "You detestable hag! How long has it taken me to see the truth about you?"

"More than it took me to see the truth about you, but I take no credit for that. Who could help seeing the truth about a puppy? Who could help seeing it at a glance? You puffed bag of conceit! You long-winded word mauler! You demand answers from me, do you? I tell you that I laugh at you—I laugh at you—I laugh at you! Leave me here to laugh——"

There was a rapping at the door. Terror and shame made Sawtrell shrink toward it.

"You're raising the house. This will be common talk to-morrow!" he cried.

But when she heard that sharp rapping, Cynthia had changed. The strength seemed to run out of her body, and she dropped into a chair. She bowed her head in her hands. The dead gold of her hair poured down.

"Oh, I know you hate me!" sobbed Cynthia. "I've always known it, all these years. And I know why—oh, I know why!"

Sawtrell drew a great breath of relief. These tears had come, he felt, in the very nick of time, when he was about to be swept from the field of battle. They enabled him to rearrange his forces to continue the struggle and come off with some dignity, at least.

Cynthia threw back her head again and stretched out her skinny arms to him.

"I left my beauty on the bed of pain!" she sobbed. "I bore you three children, and I left my girlhood with them. Oh, Joe, if you have any pity, be kind to me!"

Joseph Jefferson Sawtrell mustered the last of his strength, as he leaned against the door.

"I am going to leave you to remember what I have said. I must have an answer, Cynthia. I shall expect to hear from you before morning!"

He unlocked the door, left the room,

and bolted for his own apartment. There he sat crouched in a corner and watched the dying color in the west, as a man might sit and stare at a fading ghost. What had just happened to him was worse than a mortal blow. And it had struck him in his most vital part. His pride was irreparably stricken.

Laughter, she had said—they had used him for laughter. He began to run his eyes back down the years of his life. Was it not true, after all, that men had often smiled, as he passed them? And a shrewd consciousness of the puffed and over-acted importance of his manner stabbed him to the heart with shame and remorse. But for every ounce of shame there was a sordid pound of hatred for the woman who had showed him the truth about himself. He was on the point of rushing back to upbraid her with all the second thoughts which were running into his mind at this late date. But, with his hand on the knob of his door, he delayed. For, after all, had not what she said been true?

The anger faded a little from his mind. Pity for her began to take its place. And, though the sense of shame still lingered—and, indeed, though it would never leave him—yet he felt that he pitied her even more than he suffered for himself. He fell back in his chair at last with a deep, soft groan. He had always considered himself the very model of success in life. But now, with one child dead, and his surviving son a disinherited rascal, and his relations with his wife a horror, there remained only one thing around which he built his satisfaction—and that was Madeleine.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

OLD THUMB PRINT FIGURES IN ART SUIT

IN a suit instituted against Sir Joseph Duveen, noted art expert, by Madame Andre Hahn, a thumb print over 400 years old will be an important piece of evidence advanced by Madame Hahn. Several years ago Madame Hahn brought with her to this country a painting which she contended was the original "La Belle Ferroniere," by Leonardo da Vinci. She was negotiating the sale of the picture with the Kansas City Art Institute for the sum of $500,000, but all negotiations were brought to a close when Sir Duveen declared that the painting was not an original. Madame Hahn is now suing the art expert because it was his opinion of the painting which prevented her from selling it. Hyacinthe Ringrose, her attorney, sent experts to Europe to take the thumb prints on the pictures by Leonardo da Vinci that hang in the Vatican Galleries in Rome, the Louvre in Paris, and other art institutions. According to the experts, these thumb prints are the same as those on Madame Hahn's painting, and it is with them that Madame Hahn hopes to win her case.

MILLIONAIRE IN PRISON

IN the State Penitentiary at Joliet, Illinois, a millionaire, William Bross Lloyd, recently began to serve his sentence of from one to two years for violation of the Illinois Antisyndicalist Act. Lloyd is listed on the prison records as convict No. 8285. Upon his entrance to the prison he was measured for a prison suit, had his hair cut prison style, and his Bertillon measurements and finger prints taken.

Freed through Fire

by Harrington Strong

Author of "Eternal Assets," "Worked with Nicotine," etc.

THE massive outer gate opened as though it moved somewhat reluctantly upon its hinges, and "Bully" Krade stumbled forth into the bright sunshine.

"Good-by—and good luck!" one of the gate guards called after him.

Bully Krade did not respond to this kind, parting sentiment from the friendly guard. Instead, he snarled and took a few steps forward. And then he stopped and turned and looked back at the bulk of the great prison, clenched his fists, and shook them angrily at the gray buildings, at the heavy walls with their guard towers, and at the gate through which he had just stepped to freedom, and which already was being closed.

The guard laughed and spoke to a comrade.

"He's been in here for four years, and he isn't tamed a bit," the guard remarked. "He's a tough one, that boy! I'll bet he's back here again inside a year!"

Bully Krade, having expressed his hate, turned his back upon the prison and started walking slowly toward the distant railroad station. The prison pallor was in his face, he shuffled his feet when he walked, and his shoulders were stooped as though they supported a great weight.

For four years he had been incarcerated, and there had been no time off for good behavior, for Bully Krade had not behaved. His iron will and his wild spirit had not been broken by the discipline of the prison. He had lived through those four years as through a nightmare, and he had emerged from them with a grim determination seething in his brain.

He had Detective Jim Lanneck to thank for it! He had Lanneck to thank for four years of confinement and misery. He would square accounts with Detective Jim Lanneck, even if he went to the chair for doing it!

It was something more than the usual hatred of a convict for the officer whose work had sent him to prison. Bully Krade could not remember a time when he and Jim Lanneck had not been bitter enemies.

They had been born and reared in the same section of the city and had belonged to the same "gang" as boys. They also had gone to the same school until Bully Krade, as he became known even in boyhood, decided that schooling was merely a waste of time and began wasting his time in other and questionable ways.

Bully Krade's father had been killed in an accident when Bully was only six years old. Jim Lanneck had a good father who stood over him, corrected him, and directed his feet into an honorable path. Therein was the difference.

At eighteen, Jim Lanneck was working in a shop, and Bully Krade was spending money his mother earned by her work as a seamstress; he added to it now and then through his ability to play an excellent game of pool.

At twenty-one, Bully Krade was a

potential criminal, and Jim Lanneck was preparing to go on the police force. Krade became a crook, and Lanneck became a policeman.

There always had been enmity between them, and neither could have told how it had started. They were natural enemies. They had their fights as boys, and as young men they snarled at each other whenever they met. It was a known fact in the district that they might be at each other's throats at any moment. Their acquaintances waited and watched for the big clash, but it did not come.

Bully Krade, in time, graduated from the sneak-thief class and became assistant to a burglar of the first waters. His mother passed away, and the last restraining influence was gone. Bully Krade turned wholly bad.

Jim Lanneck, proud of his official position and of the force to which he belonged, did his work well and achieved promotion. Finally he became a member of the detective force.

Working in the old district, Detective Jim Lanneck gave special attention to Bully Krade. His zeal was something more than that of a good officer upholding the law. His personal enmity toward Bully Krade led him to spend time watching Krade that should have been spent watching other suspected men.

But, in time, Detective Jim Lanneck gained his purpose. Bully Krade and the man with whom he worked were caught in an act of burglary. Three detectives participated in the capture, but it was Jim Lanneck who took in Bully Krade. He did not take him in, however, until after a terrific fight, in which both men received bad punishment.

Bully Krade allowed his mind to dwell upon these things as he walked slowly toward the railroad station. He had a ticket to the city, and a few dollars in his pocket. He did not worry about the immediate future, for he knew that Bill Wolton would care for him for a time.

In some mysterious manner unknown to warden and guards, Bill Wolton had sent Bully Krade a message a few days before. Wolton would be waiting when Bully Krade got off the train in the city, the message had said. Wolton would have a place prepared for him. Bully Krade could rest for a few days, hide from the ever-watching and inquisitive police, and presently commence his nefarious activities anew. And Wolton was only one of the firm friends Krade had in the underworld.

Wolton had been a good friend, Bully Krade remembered. He also had been a close friend of the man with whom Krade had worked, and who had died in the prison. Bully Krade decided that he always would do the right and proper thing by Wolton, who had sent him messages from the outside several times, and had kept him supplied with tobacco and other things.

Reaching the railroad station, Bully Krade stood at one end of the platform and waited for the city-bound train. His head was hanging as though in shame, but his eyes were flashing fire, and he felt no shame at all. He would bide his time, he decided, wait for the proper opportunity, and then he would square accounts with Detective Jim Lanneck.

The train whistled in the distance. Bully Krade made certain that he had his ticket, then raised his head to observe the train's approach. And he saw his enemy!

Detective Jim Lanneck was standing a short distance away, his hands in his pockets, chewing a fat cigar and watching Bully Krade closely. Krade showed his teeth in a snarl. Detective Lanneck walked toward him deliberately.

"So you're out!" Lanneck said.

"Yes, I'm out, Lanneck! But I was in for four years. And I'll be square with you——"

"No threats, jailbird!"

"If I'm a jailbird, you made me one."

"Yeh? You seem to have forgotten that you were sent up after being caught robbing a loft."

Bully Krade snarled at him again.

"I'm not squealin' about that," he replied. "But the judge wouldn't have given me more than eighteen months if it hadn't been for the way you testified at the trial. You went out of your way to make things bad for me. I'm not forgettin' that, Lanneck!"

"No? Remember it, then, and see how much good it'll do you!"

"You'd better stay away from me," Bully Krade warned.

"It happens that I am the official reception committee," Lanneck said, grinning.

"The what?"

"Reception committee, I said. I suppose you know that when a man is released, some headquarters man is sent to see how he handles himself, where he goes, and all that. We'll keep an eye on you, you see. Well, I asked for this particular job."

"Asked for it, did you?" Krade snarled.

"Yeh! I understand that you have made threats about what you were going to do to me when you got out, so I asked for this assignment and got it, just to show you that I wasn't a bit afraid of your threats!"

The train rolled into the station. Bully Krade turned his back upon the detective and got into the smoking car. He sat down next a window, and Detective Jim Lanneck sat down beside him. Krade turned to him angrily.

"There are other seats," he said.

"Yeh? I prefer this one. I'm going to keep my eyes on you, I said. I want to see where you go and what you do. You're an ex-con, and we might want to pick you up any time."

Bully Krade's face went white. He fought to control himself before he made a reply.

"I don't like that kind of talk," he said. "Maybe I did just get out of stir. I've paid the price, and there's nothin' against me now. You let me alone. Can't you be a man?"

Jim Lanneck snarled at him. "Man?" he said. "I'm ten times the man you are! You haven't a spark of manhood in your entire makeup, Krade! You're a natural crook!"

Bully Krade's face went white again, and then he flushed because of the anger that was consuming him.

"I know what you're tryin' to do! You think that you'll make me mad enough to smash you. And then you'll have me in the jug again for assault. You can't do it, Lanneck! I'll be square with you one of these days, though!"

He half turned his back toward the detective and looked through the window. Detective Jim Lanneck continued his whispered taunts, but Bully Krade pretended that he did not hear them. The train sped on toward the city, and Krade glued his face to the window and looked at the sights along the right-of-way as a thirsty man might look at a cool, trickling stream in a forest.

II.

Now the train was approaching the great terminal. Detective Jim Lanneck turned in the seat and grasped Bully Krade roughly by the shoulder.

"Where are you going when you get off the train?" the detective demanded.

"That's my business," Krade returned.

"It is my business, too!"

"You've got nothin' against me now, and it's none of your business where I go or what I do until you do get somethin' against me," Krade said.

"I guess I'll just trail along and see where you go, then, and who you mix up with," Lanneck said. "You needn't think that you can hide from me, Krade.

You'd better realize your position. You couldn't get an honest job, even if you felt like turning honest. And if you make a single bad break it'll be the jug again for yours. And I'll be the man who puts you there. You're a crook, Krade, and you'll be treated like one. Even if you quit the town and go somewhere else, you'll be watched. You're a crook!"

Bully Krade's face was white again as he stood up and got into the aisle of the car. Detective Jim Lanneck grinned and walked close behind him. Bully Krade made his way up the platform and into the big terminal, walking slowly, trying not to shuffle, forcing his way through the crowd.

He knew that Bill Wolton would be waiting there, and he did not want Lanneck to see Wolton. And he wanted to get away from Lanneck. He did not care much whether the detective knew where he went, but he did not want to involve Bill Wolton.

He glanced through the crowd and saw Bill Wolton in the distance, and Wolton caught sight of him. Bully Krade made a slight signal that nobody but Wolton saw, and Wolton nodded his head. Detective Lanneck, at Krade's back, was watching his man closely, but he did not see that signal.

They were in the midst of a hurrying throng now. Bully Krade stopped suddenly, stooped, and pretended to be tying one of his shoe strings. Jim Lanneck stood beside him, glancing around at the crowd.

Bill Wolton had circled the crowd on the outside, and from the corners of his eyes Bully Krade saw the signal that Wolton made. He stood up and took a step forward. For an instant two or three hurrying passengers were between Jim Lanneck and himself. And in that instant Bully Krade acted.

He darted to one side, bending low. He hurried around a group waiting for a train's departure, and followed Bill Wolton, who already was making for the nearest subway entrance. Free of the crowd, Bully Krade quickened his stride. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw that Detective Jim Lanneck had noticed the get-away and was following swiftly.

Bully Krade darted down the runway to the subway platform. A downtown express was ready to pull out. Bill Wolton dashed into one of the cars, and Bully Krade folowed. The doors slipped shut, the train rolled away just as Detective Lanneck reached the platform, too late.

"Dodged him!" Bill Wolton remarked. "That man Lanneck is gettin' to be a pest! He'll get his one of these days!"

"He came up to the prison to meet me," Krade complained. "I was afraid I couldn't shake him."

"You can hide out a week or two where we're goin'," Wolton told him. "Let 'em look for you, and small good it'll do them! They sure do love to pester an ex-con."

"How's things?" Krade asked.

"Not so bad—and not so good," Bill Wolton replied. "I haven't been doin' much lately. I've got a big thing on, but I was waitin' for you. I can't do it alone, and I'm particular who I take in with me. Understand?"

They were sitting side by side at one end of the car now, and there was nobody else near. Bully Krade licked at his dry lips and faced his friend.

"I don't know exactly what I'm goin' to do," he said. "I've been put away for four years——"

"But you're out now, and you can make up for lost time," Wolton put in.

"You've never been sent up," Krade replied. "You don't know what it means. I don't think that I could stand another stretch. The only way I stood this one was thinkin' that I'd get square with Jim Lanneck when I got out. And I'll get square with him! I don't know ex-

actly how I'm goin' to do it, but I'll get square!"

"Make a fool of him," Bill Wolton said. "We'll pull off some big stunts in his district, and he'll never be able to hang 'em on us. And he'll get roasted proper at headquarters, and maybe get transferred or put back in uniform."

"I've got to do somethin' more than that to him," Bully Krade said. "I've hated him all my life, and he's hated me. I'll be square with him! But I don't know about goin' back to the old game!"

"Reformed?" Bill Wolton sneered. "Goin' to get an honest job, are you?"

"Maybe."

"Try it, and see how long you last. Jim Lanneck will go to the man who hires you and have you fired. That's the way the bulls always work it. They don't want a man to go straight after he's once been crooked. They want to keep him a crook, so they'll have somebody to work on, and maybe get promoted. You can't go straight!"

"Well, I can try it."

"Lots of men have tried it. You're goin' to throw me down?" Wolton asked.

Bully Krade faced him squarely.

"I'll never throw you down, Bill," he declared. "I'm not the man to forget a friend. I'm ready to stand right by you any time, old boy!"

"Now you're makin' regular talk!"

"But I don't want to go back to stir. I don't want to make a move that'll send me back. You don't know what it means. And if I ever do go, it'll be for somethin' that I'll do to Lanneck. It won't be for robbin' a loft or crackin' a safe."

"You're soft," Bill Wolton accused. "When you've been out a few days, you'll get bravely over that. Wait until you meet some of the old boys and listen to 'em talk. Any man is liable to be soft when he first gets out. You wait until you shake off the prison shuffle and get some color in your face. Then you'll be ready to talk a lot different."

They left the train at a station far downtown, ascended to the street, walked briskly through side streets and alleys, and finally entered the rear door of a cheap lodging house.

Bill Wolton led the way up the rickety stairs and through a dark hall and threw open a door. Bully Krade found himself in a large room, poorly furnished. But it was comfortable and seemed like the outdoors after confinement in a cell.

"We'll cook our own meals," Wolton said. "I've got enough stuff to last a week or ten days. You just smoke and rest, eat and sleep and read the papers. I've got another room down the street, and I'll show up there regular, and sleep there. I'll have some of the boys keep an eye on Jim Lanneck and see that he don't locate you."

Reaction set in so far as Bully Krade was concerned. For four days he did not leave the room, only rested, ate what he pleased and when he pleased, went to bed when he liked and arose when he wished, breaking the old prison rules.

He began to feel like a different man. He began to want to get out and do something. Daily he battled with himself, trying to decide whether to make the attempt to live honestly or throw in his lot with Bill Wolton and his ilk.

On the afternoon of the fifth day there came a knock on the door. It sounded like Bill Wolton's knock, and Krade got up quickly and crossed the room to unlock the door and pull it open. Detective Jim Lanneck, grinning, stepped inside the room.

"I told you that you couldn't hide from me," Lanneck said, looking quickly around the place. "So this is your hole, is it? This is where you are plotting your crimes?"

"I'm not plottin' anything, Lanneck," Krade told him. "I've been restin'."

"Huh! You can't rest long without money. And you can't have much of that. Who's puttin' up for you?"

"I'm not sayin'."

"You'd better say! What crook is takin' care of you until you get back nerve enough to turn a trick?"

"Maybe you know, since you found me here."

"I got a telephone tip. That's how I found you."

Krade looked at him searchingly. Who could have given that telephone tip? he asked himself. Only half a dozen men knew that he was hiding there, and all of them were firm friends of Wolton.

"Who's putting up for you?" Lanneck demanded again.

"It's none of your business," Krade replied. "What right have you to come here and bother me?"

"A cop's got a right to watch a crook," Lanneck said.

There came another knock at the door. Before Krade could call a warning, Lanneck had hurled the door open. Bill Wolton stood framed in it.

"So!" Lanneck said. "Wolton, eh? A pretty pair, you two. I have an idea that you'll bear watching."

He laughed mirthlessly and stepped aside to let Wolton enter. Wolton glanced from the detective to Krade as though to question the meaning of the scene.

"This is my place, and Krade is my friend," Wolton said. "I reckon I can have him visit me if I want."

"How about the other place you've got down the street?" Lanneck asked. "This is only a hide-away for Krade, and you know it. So you're getting your heads together, are you. You'll bear watching, all right."

He said no more. He laughed at them again, then hurried down the hall and toward the front stairs. Wolton closed the door and locked it on the inside.

"We've got to get out of here!" Krade said. "I hoped you wouldn't come while he was here, Bill. He found me—said he was tipped off by telephone. I'll get you in trouble——"

"He can't do anything unless we turn a trick, and when we do turn one it'll be so clever that it'll take a better man than Lanneck to run us down," Wolton said.

"I'm poison, Wolton. You'd better not take me in with you. I'll get you in trouble."

"What are you goin' to do, then?"

"Get me a job."

"All right—try it! You keep right on livin' here, Bully. The rent is paid to the first of the month, and you've got eats, I'll give you some more money, too, so you'll be able to get along. Get your job, then try to hold it. I'm willin' to wait. Inside two weeks you'll be ready to say that you can't go straight, and then you'll listen to me. That'll be the best."

"You're not sore, Bill?"

"Nope! But I've seen this thing before. You'll come to your senses in a couple of weeks or so, all right. Get a job, then see if you can keep it!"

"I'll never forget what you've done for me, Bill. We're still pals?"

"Sure! But if you go straight we'd better not be. If I ever got caught turnin' a trick, Lanneck would ring you in on it, sure. Take your little fling at bein' honest, Bully, and when you're tired of it we'll talk business!"

III.

Bully Krade got a job on the docks. The work was hard, and the hours were long; but he did not mind that. He experienced a sort of thrill in the knowledge that he was earning honest money, though the wages were nothing to brag about.

On the afternoon of the fourth day the foreman called him to one side.

"You're done here, Krade," the foreman said. "Go and get your time."

"What's the trouble?" Krade asked. "Haven't I been workin' as good as any?"

"I'm not kickin' on your work. But you're just out of prison, aren't you?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"It doesn't make any difference to me," said the foreman, "but a big dick came around here and put us wise, and he said that we'd better give you the gate. I've got nothin' against you, Krade. I don't care whether you've been in prison or not. But I can't afford to displease the dick."

"Lanneck, wasn't it?"

"Yeh!"

"He's an old enemy of mine."

"I can't help that, Krade. He as good as ordered me to fire you. I've got to do it. I've got to watch out for my own interests, and I don't want any dick havin' it in for me. You've got to go. Sorry!"

Bully Krade, hate seething in his heart, collected the pay due him and walked the streets looking for another job. He got one in a couple of days, an extra man working for the city street department.

This time he worked for almost a week without disaster coming to him. He was careful when he left his room, careful not to be observed. But at the end of the week he looked up from his work one day to see Detective Lanneck grinning at him. Half an hour later he was without a job.

He had hated Jim Lanneck before, but his hatred was doubled now. He raged around his room, seeing red. Had he been able to put his hands on Jim Lanneck at the moment, he probably would have gone to the electric chair for the consequences.

"I'm not licked yet!" he told Bill Wolton that evening. "I'll give the straight path another chance."

"Why not cut it out and come in with me?" Wolton asked. "You're playin' a losin' game, and there's nothin' in that!"

"I'll give it another chance, I said."

"All right, Bully, but I think you're a fool."

"You've never been in stir," Krade replied. "You don't know what it means. And if I turn crooked again, I'll land in stir sure sooner or later. I couldn't stand it. And I'd get a stiff sentence the second time, too."

Bill Wolton said nothing by way of reply. Bully Krade searched for another job. He invaded a lumber yard, finally, where they wanted more men.

"I came out of Sing Sing a few days ago," he told the superintendent. "I'm comin' clean with you and tellin' you the truth."

"What'd they send you up for?"

"I was helpin' a burglar, and we got caught on a loft job."

"Tryin' to go straight?"

"Yes, sir," Bully answered

"You get a job! Show up in the mornin'."

Bully Krade showed up in the morning. His job was unloading cars of cement along with a dozen other men. For four days he worked at it, and then the superintendent called him into the yard office and gave him his pay.

"Sorry!" the superintendent said. "But I can't do anything else. Some big dick has been to the boss and ordered you fired. We shave the law pretty close ourselves around here sometimes, pilin' stuff on the walks, and all that. We can't afford to have an officer layin' for us."

Bully Krade knew that it was useless to argue, and so he did not. He returned to his room. For an hour he paced back and forth, working up his rage against Detective Jim Lanneck.

Lanneck had said that he did not pos-

sess a spark of manhood. He had tried to show that he did, and Lanneck had prevented it. He realized fully now that Bill Wolton had been right.

He had an idea of leaving the city and going to some other town, but he did not want to do that. He did not know any other town. And he did not want to seem to be running away from Lanneck.

Evening came, but Bully Krade did not prepare and eat food. He put on his cap and went down into the streets. He walked and walked for hours. Here was a stiff problem, and he was not endowed with brains enough to solve it to his satisfaction. He could only feel his intense hatred for Detective Jim Lanneck.

He dropped in at a pool hall where he often had played before being "sent up." Two or three acquaintances nodded to him, but none was cordial. They knew that Lanneck was at his heels, and they did not want to show friendship and so perhaps get into trouble themselves. Krade marked that down against Lanneck, too.

The only friend he had in the world was Bill Wolton, he told himself. Bill Wolton was not afraid to be kind to him. Perhaps it would be best, after all, to join hands with Wolton and carry on a nefarious existence as long as he could before they caught him.

He sat down in a corner to watch a game that was being played on a table before him. A man he knew slouched by and whispered from one corner of his mouth.

"Don't go near Riley's place, Bully," he said. "The dicks are watchin' it, and there's a raid comin' off. They're roundin' up everybody to-night. Any man with a record they catch in there is due for a lot of trouble."

The informer passed on. Bully Krade raised his head a trifle and digested the news. He had had no intention of going to Riley's place.

He knew the place well from the old days, though he had not visited it since being released. Riley's place was an old, four-story frame building on a dark side street. It was a cheap lodging house with half a dozen entrances and exits. There was a cigar store and pool hall on the first floor, where formerly there had been a saloon. Riley was a "fence," and his place was a den of thieves.

Crooks gathered there to make their plans. In a dingy room on one of the upper floors they would put their heads together and arrange their "tricks." Bully Krade had no intention of going to Riley's.

But suddenly he sat up straight in his chair. He remembered now. Bill Wolton had spoken of going to Riley's that very evening. Bully Krade supposed he was planning a trick. And if Bill Wolton was caught in a raid, it might go hard with him, especially since Jim Lanneck knew that Wolton had been aiding Bully Krade.

He must save Bill Wolton, his only friend.

Krade got up quickly and hurried into the street. He jammed his cap down on his head and walked briskly until he came to the dark cross street, down which he turned.

Now, in the semidarkness, he almost ran. It was early, but a man never knew when a raid would be made. He must get Bill Wolton out of there, warn him of the danger!

He reached Riley's place, slowed down, and walked through the front door. Riley himself was sitting behind the cigar counter.

"Hello, Bully!" he said. "Thought it was about time you were showing up around here."

"I'm lookin' for Bill Wolton," Krade said.

"He's upstairs, second floor, last room back on the right," Riley said. "How do you find yourself?"

"Pretty good!"

"Understand that you're trying the straight game. There's nothin' in it, Bully."

"I just got a tip that they're goin' to raid you," Krade whispered. "I want to get Wolton out."

Riley showed sudden alarm. Raids were nothing new to him, and he generally did not suffer much. But there were men in his place just then, old friends, who could not afford to be caught.

"You go get Wolton out," Riley said. "I'll warn the rest of the boys. Thanks, Bully!"

Bully Krade dashed through the room that Riley had indicated, and knocked on the door. It was a peculiar knock, one that, Krade knew, Bill Wolton would understand.

Wolton himself opened the door and held it back for Krade to enter. There was another man in the room.

"Get out of here," Krade whispered. "I've been tipped off to a raid. Make it snappy, Wolton! I've told Riley, and he'll warn all the others. If they catch you in here——"

He stopped speaking, and his eyes bulged. From the floor below came unmistakable sounds. The raid had been "sprung." Bully Krade did not know that Detective Jim Lanneck was in charge of the raiding party, had seen Bully enter, and had started the raid earlier than was intended, to catch Bully.

"They're at it already!" Wolton said.

As he spoke, he extinguished the lights and darted into the hall with his companion. Bully Krade sprang into the hall, also. Men were running from the other rooms. All the lights went out.

There was a moment of confusion, with men jostling against one another, some trying to get to windows, others ascending to the floors above. In that moment of confusion, Bully Krade lost Wolton.

He found himself alone. He realized his predicament fully. To be caught there would mean being dragged to a cell. He was a man with a record, and he would be caught in a well-known hang-out for criminals. Six months for vagrancy would be the least he could expect. And, if some "trick" had been turned, the police might fasten it on him. It was damning enough that a man just out of stir be found there. No judge would believe in an attempt at reformation after that!

Again he darted to the stairs. There was bedlam below. The police were smashing doors in an effort to get through the place. Men were shouting at one another. Electric torches were flashing. The crafty Riley had snapped out all the lights in the building to give his customers an equal chance with the police.

A scream from below, and a spurt of flame. Red flames sprang up and attacked the old building. They spread rapidly and started up the rear stairs. Men shouted and clashed, cursed and groaned.

Bully Krade, with fear in his heart, dashed to the third floor of the building. He was seeking a place in which he might hide until the hunt was at an end. He was not thinking of the fire below —he was thinking what it would mean if he were taken into custody there.

He shivered at the thought of a cell. Tears of rage streaked down his cheeks. He was innocent; he had come to Riley's merely to save a friend. But no story that he could tell would be believed. He was an ex-convict, a few days out of stir, with a detective ready to go on the stand and blacken his character. There was no hope. He had to hide.

At a rear window he looked down. There was no fire escape by which he could climb; and, anyway, there were officers in the alley. He dashed up to the fourth floor and ran to the front window in the hall there.

He looked down, and what he saw appalled him. The flames had spread rapidly through the old, dry building. They were shooting out the front of the first two stories already, in the front as well as in the rear.

Fear of the fire came to him now, too. Apparatus was rushing to the scene. Krade saw detectives and officers in uniform guiding prisoners down the street. He saw Riley standing some distance away in the custody of a policeman, looking back at his doomed establishment.

He had to get down, he told himself. He had to get out of the building, which was doomed. He was afraid of a cell, but he didn't want to burn there like a cornered rat.

Down to the third floor he went. He was not thinking of police officers now. He was thinking only of getting out of that burning building.

Through a rolling wall of smoke he charged and gained the front hall on the third floor. He collided with another man. It was Detective Jim Lanneck.

"Ha!" Lanneck shouted. "Got you again, Bully!"

Steel snapped on Krade's wrists.

"This'll fix you!" Lanneck cried. "Caught in Riley's with a gang of crooks. Six months on the island, and maybe something more! I've got you right, Krade!"

Bully Krade stumbled back against the wall. The smoke was comencing to roll toward them.

"Lanneck, you fool!" he cried. "We'll both burn!"

"They'll get the fire out, all right," Lanneck answered. "Don't worry about that, you yellow pup! Afraid of a little fire and smoke, eh? Not a spark of manhood!"

"We'll burn——"

"Up to the fourth floor!" Lanneck commanded. He had his revolver out and was menacing Krade with it.

Krade staggered through the rolling wall of smoke once more, with Lanneck close behind him. Up to the fourth floor they went. But the smoke was there, too. The fire was spreading rapidly. Bully Krade knew that it never would be stopped, that the building would be ashes in a short while.

"We've got to get out, Lanneck!" he cried.

"Yellow!" and Lanneck sneered. "We'll stay up here until they get the fire out."

"They can't——"

"Go to the front of the hall!" Lanneck commanded.

Krade staggered along the wall, which already was hot to the touch. Lanneck, the fool! He did not seem to realize how serious was their position.

Bully Krade turned half maniac. He always had been afraid of fire. He reeled back from the window, and Lanneck turned away from him for an instant to try to look down at the street. Bully Krade raised his manacled hands —and struck!

Detective Jim Lanneck went down as though he had been shot. Krade reeled back from the window again. Now he could make his break for safety. It would be a terrific fight, he knew, to get down those front stairs through the fire and the smoke, and reach the street. But he had to try it—it was the only chance.

He looked down at the unconscious detective. How he had hated Lanneck! He had only to get out of the building and rid himself of the manacles. With Lanneck dead in the fire, there would be nobody to make Bully Krade's life one of misery afterward. Perhaps he would be allowed to work honestly and in peace.

And Lanneck had it coming to him, Krade decided. Here was a chance to be rid of Lanneck forever. Here was the chance to satisfy a lifelong hatred.

Bully Krade laughed mirthlessly and

started back along the hall to the stairway. He stumbled through the smoke, groping for the banister. And suddenly he stopped.

What was it that Lanneck had said? That he did not have a spark of manhood? Had Lanneck been right? Would it be the part of a man to leave even an ancient enemy helpless to burn like a rat caught in a trap?

Through the mind of Bully Krade flashed the consequences of rescuing Jim Lanneck. There would be a Lanneck in the future to dodge his steps and make his existence unbearable. Lanneck stood betwen him and a life of honest toil.

A moment he hesitated, and then he sobbed, and then he stumbled back through the smoke. He stooped and grasped the unconscious Lanneck by the shoulders, half lifted him, and carried him through the smoke and to the stairs.

It was not difficult reaching the third floor. But when he reached it he found the stairs a mass of black, pungent smoke, with little darts of red flame showing through here and there. Krade stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth, closed his eyes, lifted Lanneck to a better position, and started down.

The air was stifling. Once a sheet of flame licked at his head. He scarcely dared breathe. Down and down he went, and finally he had reached the landing on the second floor.

Now he was forced to open his eyes for an instant. He could see nothing but smoke and flame ahead of him. A dash of water from some line of hose struck against him and then was gone. He opened his smarting eyes again, but saw only smoke and flame. He had to go down that last flight to the street. He was not sure whether the stairs were there at all.

If he dropped Lanneck here, he would have a better chance. Lanneck was a heavy man, and Krade scarcely could handle him. But he did not drop Lanneck. Once more he held his breath, grasped the body of the unconscious man, and stumbled on.

Step by step he descended. Flames licked at him. Pungent smoke engulfed him. Red flashes were before his eyes. His chest seemed about to burst. His throat was a thing of agony.

Another step—and he fell. The stairs had been burned through there. He crashed into a mass of burning, smoking timbers. Lanneck fell beside him.

Once more he picked up the unconscious man and staggered on. He was not certain that he was going in the right direction, but he had hope. Again a dash of water struck him. He could hear men calling hoarsely.

A flash of flame seared his face and singed his hair. He felt that he could not hold his breath a moment longer, but he feared that it would mean death to breathe. Once more he opened his eyes. Nothing before him except smoke and flame!

He tried to run forward. He staggered and stumbled. Once he lost hold of Lanneck, but stooped and grasped him by the shoulders again.

A breath of air—a chorus of cries! Rough hands grasped him. He knew that he had gained the street. He could not see at all now. His face pained terribly—but he could breathe.

Behind him sounded a tremendous crash as the building collapsed. A shower of sparks engulfed him and the others. And then he was being led down the street. And a moment later a police surgeon was putting salve on his burns, applying a soothing application to his eyes.

IV.

It was at the precinct station that Bully Krade opened his eyes. He could not see well at first, but gradually his vision cleared. Half a score of officers were around him. And he saw Jim

Lanneck, pale, bandaged about the head, walking toward him across the room.

Lanneck waved his hand, and the other officers backed away. Lanneck stepped forward, fumbled in a pocket, and took out a key. The hand-cuffs dropped from Krade's wrists.

"There's no charge against you, Krade," Jim Lanneck said. "You were just in Riley's buying some cigarettes—understand? Thanks for what you did for me, Krade. My cussed stubbornness would have killed both of us! Why didn't you leave me to die?"

"I couldn't!" Krade gasped. "But I'll be square with you yet——"

"We're square now, as far as I'm concerned," Lanneck replied. "Krade, maybe I've been too hard on you. You go back to the dock as soon as you're fit, and get that old job back. I made 'em fire you, and I'm man enough to make 'em hire you again, too! And you won't be bothered, Krade, as long as you go straight."

"Thanks!" Krade said.

"No thanks! I'm the man that should be doin' the thankin', Krade."

Detective Jim Lanneck started to turn away, but he turned quickly back again and spoke in a low voice, so that none but Bully Krade could hear.

"I said you didn't have a bit of manhood," the detective said. "I want to apologize for sayin' that, Krade! You're all man!"

THE OLDEST SHERIFF IN THE SOUTHWEST

MUSKOGEE COUNTY, Oklahoma, recently elected as its sheriff, J. F. Ledbetter, a man seventy-three years old. He is said to be the oldest sheriff in the entire Southwest, and perhaps in the country. Since 1894, "Bud" Ledbetter has been a picturesque figure in Oklahoma, where he has established a reputation as a successful hunter of bandits. He was the captor of Al Jennings, train robber, and a score of other notorious outlaws. Before Oklahoma became a State, Ledbetter was a Deputy United States Marshal, deputy sheriff, and special investigator.

When the sheriff-elect was twitted about his age, he replied that he would get some young fellows of fifty or sixty years of age to help him in the administration of his office, and he promised to keep the pace set by these "kids." Ledbetter was a close personal friend of the late Theodore Roosevelt.

TWO PRISONERS ATTEMPT SUICIDE BY HANGING

THE attempts of two prisoners to commit suicide a short time ago at police headquarters were frustrated when the attendant whom they had sent for some water returned to the prisoners before they had succeeded in carrying out their plans. The prisoners are Pons Gonsales, twenty-three years old, an actor, whose address is Mills Hotel No. 1, and Abraham Goodbridge, twenty-six years old, an actor, of the same address. The men were arrested on charges of extorting $100 from George Schmidt, of No. 501 West Twenty-first Street, who claimed that the couple represented themselves as being detectives. After asking an attendant to bring them some water, the men hastily tied hand-made ropes about their necks and then fastened them to the top iron-bar ceiling. When James Barrett, the attendant, returned a few minutes later, he cut the men down and had them removed to the hospital. Both will recover.

While Sinclair Slept

by

Elliot Bailey

Author of "Pool of Retribution," etc.

"UNIQUE!" scoffed Malleson, apropos of something we were discussing in the club one night. "There's nothing 'unique.' It's the most absurd word in the English language. We're a curious people. We get snow in February and talk about it as if it weren't the most natural thing in the world; we get a heat wave in August and go off into ecstasies of surprise—columns about it in the daily papers and so on.

"It's the same with murder cases. Ever since Cain put an end to Abel, murder has been with us and will be, human nature being what it is, until the millennium. We get the same old motives time after time, the same sordid details, and yet every other case which comes up is boomed as something different, unusual. In nine cases out of ten, some misguided writer is sure to call it 'unique.'

"Unique, indeed! In all my experience, I have come across only one case deserving any approach to the word. Almost certainly, that, too, has parallels, if one only knew them. But it certainly possessed some peculiar features. Like to hear about it?"

"Bet your life! Shoot!" we chorused.

Malleson settled himself in his chair.

"Most of you," he began, "will remember something of the death of John Murray, the painter. It's a good many years ago now, but it created a considerable stir at the time. For one thing, there was Murray's position—he was one of the foremost painters of the day—and, secondly, the fact that he was found dead in his studio one morning with a wound in his back, which showed that a knife had been driven home between his shoulders and withdrawn.

"Gradually, however, excitement died down. No arrest was made. There was the usual outcry against the police by the people who always fancy themselves greater detectives than the experts with their years of training, and then it became tacitly understood that the crime was 'unsolved.' The busy world marched on. John Murray's work remained, but the manner of his end became largely forgotten by a public always absorbed in the ephemeral interest of the moment.

"One of the great friends of John Murray at that time was Robert Sinclair, a writer whose work was beginning to attain some prominence. Although Murray was considerably the elder, they were much attached. Sinclair indeed was at first palpably overcome by the artist's tragic end, and he spared no pains himself by personal investigation to bring to justice the murderer of his friend, whose death was

all the more sad from the fact that only a few months before he had married a young and very beautiful wife. But the efforts of Sinclair, whom I knew well, to elucidate the mystery, fared no better than those of the official police; and more than once he said to me despondently that he believed that no trace of the murderer would ever be found.

"It certainly looked so as the weeks and months passed by. The affair had long ceased to be a matter of public concern, and those of us who were friends of the family could not help observing the growing intimacy which was arising between Robert Sinclair and the young widow who, sincerely attached to her husband as she had been, viewed Sinclair's efforts to avenge his death with an approbation she did not attempt to conceal.

"The probable sequel arising from this increasing friendship I must say commended itself to all of us. She was only a girl who, in the nature of things, could not be expected to retain her widowhood forever, and we all felt that if she were to marry again, no one would have been nearer the choice of her late husband than the man who had been his close companion, and for whom he had had so high a regard.

"As matters progressed, therefore, it seemed that only such an interval as was decent would elapse before Eileen Murray became the wife of Robert Sinclair.

"So all of us thought when Fate intervened and Sinclair himself made the discovery which blasted all his hopes and dissolved forever any chance of a partnership which might in normal circumstances have been so suitable and so happy.

"I shall never forget that evening. I was sitting alone in my apartment, and, curiously enough, I was thinking of Murray and his young wife. It was sad for her, of course, this abrupt and ruthless termination of their married life, and yet, I asked myself, wouldn't she be happier, after all, with Sinclair? For one thing, they were more of an age, and somehow I had always questioned the reality of her love for the painter. That he had loved her, was certain; and I was willing to grant affection for him on her part, but love—well, I doubted it. Yes, I decided, Robert Sinclair was much more suitable.

"Such was the stage my reflections had reached when Sinclair himself walked in. A glance at him showed me that something terrible had happened, and I sprang to my feet. His face was ashen, his features drawn and haggard, and he turned on me a look so piteous in its misery and utter hopelessness that I was profoundly moved and shocked.

"'Good Lord, man!' I exclaimed. 'What in Heaven's name is the matter?'

"So white was he, so obviously shaken, that I was afraid he was about to faint, and, hastily going to a cupboard, I poured out half a glass of whisky, straight.

"'Here, drink this,' I said. 'Get it down before you try to speak.'

"The glass clattered against his teeth as he held it to his lips, but he gulped the stuff down, and it seemed to steady him a bit, as I hoped it would.

"I watched him narrowly.

"'Now,' I said, 'what is it?'

"The spirit had brought a tinge of color into his cheeks, but it had not lessened the misery in his eyes. He took a step forward, and so low did he speak that it was almost a whisper.

"'Malleson,' he said brokenly, 'I have found the murderer of John Murray.'

"Had he struck me in the face, I should have been less surprised. At his words, more still at his demeanor, all my vague thoughts and surmises, which until then had been unformed, unacknowledged even to myself, took concrete shape, crystallizing into a whole so terrible, so fraught with horror, that I shrank back appalled from its con-

temptation. I think that at that moment I turned as pale as Sinclair was himself.

"'Who?' I cried. 'Who?'

"He did not reply immediately, but going to a chair at the table sank into it and buried his head in his hands.

"A soundless, shuddering sobbing that was pitiful to witness wracked his body, filling me with that impotent wish to render comfort, which assails us all when suddenly we come face to face with a situation such as this, a situation beyond mere words to deal with or assuage.

"In silence I waited, and at length he raised his head. With relief I saw that he had regained some measure of self-control.

"'Forgive me,' he said, 'but—but—we were to have been married soon—after a year—and now——'

"Again I feared he was going to break down, but this time his nerve held.

"'I will tell you everything, Malleson,' he said. 'It will do me good to tell you.'

"He paused a while as if collecting his thoughts, and I was conscious of a strange reluctance to hear the story, of which already I felt I had an inkling. She was so young, so fragile, no more than a child. The thought was horrible, and yet——

"Abruptly, I ceased my speculations. Sinclair was speaking now, his words coming in a queer, strained voice which told in itself the mental anguish that the man was undergoing.

"'It will not be necessary to remind you, Malleson, how night and day since the—the—death of John Murray I have worked to discover by whose hand he met his end. Lately, perhaps, I have slackened off. The case seemed hopeless. Every clew, such as they were, led nowhere, and I began to feel that what had baffled the efforts of the police I was a fool to attempt. Nevertheless, in my innermost mind the problem has never been absent for any length of time. Somehow, I always felt that one day, perhaps when I least expected it, I should stumble upon the truth. Malleson, I was right. I have—Heaven help me—stumbled upon the truth; or, rather, it has been revealed to me—revealed to me in a dream.'

"'What!' I cried incredulously. 'In a dream?'

"He raised his hand.

"'Please do not interrupt,' he protested. 'I shall make it quite plain to you in the end—quite plain,' he repeated bitterly.

"I was silent. However amazing his statement was going to be, and it had certainly begun in a bizarre enough manner, it was evident that he had summoned up sufficient will power to tell it all to me without faltering. I had only to sit and listen to learn what the ending was.

"'Yes, in a dream,' he continued almost defiantly, as if aware that the statement was a challenge to my intelligence. 'For two hours before going to bed last night I had pondered afresh upon the problem which has obsessed me so long: Who killed John Murray? I asked myself again and again, as I had asked it so many times in the past months. Who did kill Murray? But as usual the answer eluded me, and at length I fell asleep. And in my sleep the answer came, ruthless, but pitilessly logical, plain as if set down upon the printed page. I awoke, knowing what all those days and weeks and months I had been endeavoring to learn, awoke to the realization of misery and unhappiness which can never leave me again in this world or the next.'

"A moment he faltered, and then went on resolutely:

"'I dreamed that I was sitting late at night in my own library, a book upon my knees, but my thoughts far distant. I even knew upon what those thoughts dwelt. They were of John Murray and

his wife Eileen. Upon my countenance was a strange expression, matching the thoughts within. Then I saw myself gradually sink back in the chair; the book slipped from my knees; I was asleep.

" 'For a while I remained thus, through the medium of my dream watching my own sleeping body in the chair. Then all at once I saw myself stir and, still asleep, rise to my feet and move across the room. Going over to my writing table in the window, I rummaged for a moment among my papers, and then, apparently finding what I wanted—what it was I could not see—I came back into the center of the room.

" 'After this, things for a while became fogged and indistinct. Dimly, at intervals, I became aware that I was walking through the darkness of the streets, the cool night wind playing upon my uncovered head, but the next definite thing I knew was that I was outside the door of Murray's studio, which opened directly upon the quiet roadway in which it stood.

" 'Unbidden, as I was accustomed to do, I turned the handle and entered.

" 'Late as it was, Murray was still up. His back toward me as I came in, and he was standing looking at an easel on which was the preliminary outline of a woman's portrait. He glanced at me over his shoulder for an instant, and I saw the surprise in his eyes at my late arrival. "Hello, Sinclair!" he exclaimed. "Just a moment, old man. I want to judge the effect of this."

" 'He turned away again to the picture, and I looked round the studio. He was alone; there was no sign of Eileen. I noticed that a panel in the wainscoting was open, exposing a cavity in the wall, which I did not know existed. I walked close up behind him and from my sleeve slipped down into my hand the object I had taken from my writing table. It was a knife. I raised it and plunged it to the hilt between the shoulders of John Murray.'

"Sinclair broke off with a sob and turned his tragic eyes on my horrified ones.

" 'Yes, Malleson,' he said, 'I killed poor Murray.'

"For a moment I gazed at him speechlessly. Heaven knows what I had feared he was going to say, but this—this was incredible.

" 'Sinclair,' I cried, 'think what you are saying, man! It's impossible! You yourself tell me that it was only a dream.'

" 'A dream of what took place that night,' he asserted gloomily. 'Listen to its ending. As Murray, without a cry, sank limply to the floor, I withdrew the knife, hid it in the cavity in the wall, slid back the panel, and, two minutes after I had entered it, went out from the studio into the night. Again came the sense of walking through the darkness. Then I saw myself reënter my own room and reseat myself in my former chair. And, Malleson, I saw that I was still asleep. I had committed the crime asleep. This morning,' he went on, for I was dumb, 'I went round to Murray's studio. With some difficulty I found and opened the panel in the wall. Within, was my knife which I had vaguely missed for some time—I bought it in a curio shop and used it as a paper knife—and it was stained with blood. Can you doubt now?

" 'There's yet another thing,' he continued. 'The night that John Murray was murdered, I remember I fell asleep in my chair exactly as shown in my dream. My housekeeper woke me in the morning, and I remember wondering then how my shoes, which were clean the night before, had got the mud on them.'

" 'Stop!' I cried. 'Stop, Sinclair, for pity's sake. It couldn't have happened—it couldn't. It's the idea of a mad-

man that a man asleep can murder another. Besides, granting it to be possible, what motive, what fearful desire, could you have had to drive your subconscious self to commit this act? Why, he was your best friend, and you his. I can't believe it; I won't.'

"Across his lined face, which had aged visibly even during the recital of his incredible story, there flitted such a medley of emotion as I never wish to see again upon the face of living man. It was as if the torture of his thoughts had passed his bearing, leaving me who watched him shuddering and appalled.

"'My best friend,' he echoed. 'Yes, he was once—before he married the girl he did, the girl for whom I would have given my very soul. After that, I hated him. Night and day walking and'—he lowered his voice as he said it, and its agony pierced my heart—'sleeping, I wished and prayed that he might die, somehow, anyhow, that I might yet have my chance of the prize of which he had balked me. Never was this wish out of my thoughts. His whole personality became loathsome to me. I hated him, I hated the happiness that his marriage brought him. Willingly, I would have seen him die, yet never, I swear it, even in my wildest moment would I have knowingly laid hands upon him myself. Yet here was the poison rankling in my blood, tended and fostered by my evil mind, which by its hideous possession of me compelled me to the deed of which my normal being remained unconscious. Here you have the motive, the desire of which you spoke, the thing which in the end drove me to kill my erstwhile friend.

"'Yet when they found him, remorse for my ungodly desires came upon me, and, little thinking that my hand it was which had sent him to his doom, I tried to make what reparation I could by tracing his murderer. Like my former hatred, the idea took complete hold upon me. You know how I worked, running each slender clew to the blank wall of negation, striving always to unravel what would not be revealed. And now, dear Heaven, I know—I know.'

"He paused, and so low were his next words that at first I did not catch their import.

"'Amends,' he murmured. 'Can one ever make amends? Will it be sufficient—a life for a life?'

"Before I could stop him, he had passed his hand across his lips and had swallowed what his hand had held. I caught his body as it swayed toward the floor. At once I went for aid, but it was of no use. He died shortly afterward."

Malleson stopped. The extraordinary recital had affected him as it had us who listened. But he read one unspoken question in our eyes.

"Had he really done it? Had he killed John Murray? I do not know. No one will ever know definitely. At any rate, he thought he had."

WILL REQUIRE PHOTOGRAPH OF APPLICANT FOR PISTOL PERMIT

AN order issued by Police Commissioner Enright, of New York, instructed all applicants for pistol permits for 1923 to furnish a photograph, passport size, which will be attached to the permit. It was explained that the object of the new regulation was to obviate the possibility of lending or transferring permits. There has also been an increase in the fee for the coming year, from $1 to $1.50. Approximately 30,000 permits were issued last year, of which, it was reported, about 10,000 went to bankers and brokers in the financial district around Wall Street, for use by messengers and special officers.

Spooky Hollow

by Carolyn Wells

Author of "Feathers Left Around," "Sinister Shadows," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

AT the breakfast hour Miss Anne Vincent is found dead of a stab wound in her room at Greatlarch, the palatial residence of her brother, Homer. A man calling himself Henry Johnson, who came to Greatlarch on the evening preceding the killing to interest Vincent in the manufacture of synthetic rubies, is thought to be the murderer. A valuable ruby belonging to Miss Vincent cannot be found. It is supposed that Johnson, who has disappeared, stole the ruby and murdered its owner to protect himself.

During the investigation, the fact that Miss Rosemary Vincent, who has lived at Greatlarch since her father, Homer's brother, died, is a child of Homer's brother by an illegal relationship. Her fiancé, Bryce Collins, wishes to get the true facts of Rosemary's parentage, so he hires a celebrated detective, Fleming Stone, to solve the murder and to clear up the doubts surrounding Rosemary's antecedents.

Stone investigates. In the presence of Collins, Rosemary, and Homer Vincent, he makes his report: That the missing man's initials are not H. J.; that "Johnson" didn't come to Greatlarch to see about synthetic rubies; that he did not murder Miss Anne Vincent; and that he did not steal her famous jewel.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIBSY EXPLORES.

IN blank amazement, Rosemary and Bryce Collins looked at the detective. Fibsy sat listening, open-minded and receptive. He knew that if Fleming Stone said the missing man's name was not Henry Johnson, it wasn't. But he had no data on which to hazard a guess as to what the right name might be, so he waited.

Homer Vincent, however, showed a decided interest in Stone's statements.

"Do you know," he said, "I am not surprised to learn that the man used an assumed name. I suspected it from his little start of surprise when I called him Johnson now and then, just as a man would if he were using the wrong name and forgot it occasionally. But I don't understand why you say those are not his initials on the umbrella. Of course, it might be somebody else's umbrella——"

"No, Mr. Vincent," Stone said, "it is his umbrella, all right. But the initials on it are J. H. and not H. J."

"Now how in the world do you know that?" Collins exclaimed. "How can you tell?"

"Because the H is a trifle larger. Monograms are invariably made with the initial of the surname larger than the initial of the Christian name, and the H in this case, though nearly the same size as the J, is in fact a little larger and more prominent. See for yourself."

Stone left the room a moment and returned with the umbrella, which he had borrowed from the police and left in the coat room of Greatlarch. They all scrutinized the engraved letters and were forced to the conclusion that Stone was right.

"This complicates matters," Vincent said thoughtfully. "He told me his name was Johnson, and that he lived at the Walford, in New York. Perhaps that was also a fictitious address. And you think his errand about the synthetic rubies was also faked, Mr. Stone?

Then he came purposely to murder my sister——"

Homer Vincent was staggered by the thoughts that rushed to his mind consequent upon these new disclosures of Stone.

"But Mr. Stone says that man didn't kill Antan!" put in Rosemary. "Do you know who did, Mr. Stone?"

"Not positively," said Stone. "I shall have to go down to New York and see what I can do——"

"Perhaps he had an accomplice," suggested Vincent. "I hadn't thought of that before."

"No, I hadn't, either," Stone said. "Perhaps he had. At any rate, I will go down to New York to-morrow, and I will ask you all to say nothing to any one of my findings. I speak confidentially to you here, because Mr. Collins is my employer, and Mr. Vincent and Miss Rosemary are the ones chiefly interested in avenging the murder."

"Aside from the identity of the murderer, Mr. Stone, how do you explain the locked door?"

"That's hard to explain, Mr. Vincent. The doctors state the murder was committed not more than an hour or so before the body was discovered. That makes it about seven o'clock or after. But I have talked with the little maid, Francine, and she vows no one was in or near Miss Vincent's room after six that morning. She says her room is next to that her mistress occupied, and that she was awake from six o'clock on. She declares no intruder could have made his way in without her hearing him."

"Then," and Vincent spoke seriously, "do you still discard my suggestion of possible supernatural forces, Mr. Stone?"

"I most certainly do, Mr. Vincent. Had the lady been killed by shock or fright, there might be a reason to consider an apparition or a phantom visitant, but not even a spook from Spooky Hollow could stab its victim to the heart with a real dagger."

"Of course not," and Homer Vincent sighed and shook his head. "Go on, then," he continued. "Now that you have a definite proposition to work on and a hope of discovering the criminal, I renew my offer of funds for the enterprise. Go to New York, Mr. Stone, use every endeavor to find out the real name of the man who called himself Johnson, and send all your bills to me."

"Thank you, Mr. Vincent," Bryce Collins said gratefully. "You take a load off my shoulders! I'm willing enough to stand all the expense, but I haven't your resources, and mine are running low."

"That's all right, Bryce. The thing must be pushed through. And since Mr. Stone seems sanguine, I can only hope his quest will succeed."

And then, with a murmured word of excuse, Vincent left the room.

"He's often like that," Rosemary said, looking affectionately after him. "He gets weary and sad at this continual discussion of Antan's murder. Now he'll go and play the organ."

Which is just what Vincent did. Soon they could hear muted strains of soft music rolling through the house.

"Yes, he's sad," Rosemary reiterated as she listened a moment to the chords. "Not worried or revengeful so much as deeply sorrowful. I can always tell by what he plays."

Fibsy, always interested in an unfamiliar phase of human behavior, went softly out into the marble vestibule that led to the organ room. Stepping up onto the balcony that overlooked the great, churchlike room, the boy listened to the music Homer Vincent produced.

Without musical education, Fibsy had a natural appreciation of harmony, and as he raptly listened he felt almost as if he could read what was in the mind of the player. At least, he sensed the

tragedy that filled the soul of the man at the keyboard, and realized, in part at any rate, what he suffered.

Fleming Stone, alone with the two young lovers, was so gentle, so sympathetic, that before they knew it they were pouring out to him all the details of the other tragedy of Rosemary's birth.

"It must be looked into," Stone said with decision. "I'm sure, Miss Vincent, you would rather know the worst than to live in ignorance of the truth."

"Yes," but the girl hesitated. "I'm not sure. Suppose my mother was——"

"Don't look at it like that. Your own refinement and good taste point to an ancestry of the right sort of people. Don't let yourself think otherwise."

But this speech was not entirely sincere. Stone, always sympathetic in sorrow, merely said what he could to comfort the girl at the moment. After the murder business was settled, he proposed to take up the matter of Rosemary's parentage. But he could not attend to both at once, and he hated to have her grieve unnecessarily.

"And your uncle is right to a degree," he said, after she and Collins had told the details of Vincent's restrictions. "I don't know him as well as you do, but I can see he is a high-minded gentleman with a right appreciation of his family responsibilities. Also, I see how dependent he is for happiness on the creature comforts of life. A door left open or slammed shut, a delayed answer to his summons, an intrusion on his hours of privacy—any such things would, I am sure, annoy him to distraction, when another type of man wouldn't even notice them."

"That's just exactly Uncle Homer!" Rosemary cried. "You read him perfectly!"

"And I can read you, too, my dear." Stone smiled at her. "You love life and young society and parties and attentions from the young men. You'd love to entertain lavishly in this beautiful home, to fill these great rooms with gay and merry guests, to have all sorts of wonderful clothes and jewels. Come now, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, indeed!" and Rosemary flushed with pleasure at his mere suggestion of such delights. "But I know I oughtn't to think of such things, and I ought to be deeply grateful to Uncle Homer because he lets me stay here."

"That is true, Rosemary." Stone spoke very gravely. "It might well have been his way to ask you to live elsewhere. And since he offers you a home here with stipulations, you should obey him, however unpleasant to you his restrictions are."

"I know it," but the girl's lip quivered a little, and her golden-brown eyes filled with tears at thought of her stained name, as well as her uncongenial life.

"You're sure your uncle has no further knowledge of your mother than he has told you?" Stone inquired. "He's not the sort of man to conceal some fact that he thinks might make you even more sad than you are now?"

"No, I don't think so. Do you, Bryce?"

"No, sir, I don't. Mr. Vincent has been frank and outspoken in all of our discussions of the subject. I feel grateful to him, as Rosemary does, but I think he might allow her a little more freedom. However, as soon as I can persuade her to consent, I mean to marry her and take her far away from all people who know her at all. We shall start a new life for ourselves——"

"No, we will not!" Rosemary said decidedly. "I shall never marry anybody. An illegitimate child has no right to marry."

"Tell me again," Stone said to her, "of your homecoming that night. You saw no sign of a guest in the house?"

"No, but that is not strange. I didn't look in the general coat room, of course,

and he had left none of his belongings anywhere else."

"You went around first and peeped in at your uncle's window. Why did you do that?"

"Partly to see if he was likely to hear me come in—it was late—and partly because I saw from the driveway a very bright light in that room. It was an unusually bright light, so that I thought the room was afire."

"What caused it?"

"Oh, only that uncle's open fire chanced to be blazing brightly. Then I saw him, and saw he was so engrossed in his papers and letters that I could take the chance of slipping in unobserved, and I did."

"And you saw him putting away something glittering?"

"Yes. That was the key of the wine cellar. I suppose he had Mellish get out some special wine for his visitor."

"Well. my child, I will do all I can for you later on, but now the case of your aunt will demand all my attention. I want a little talk with your uncle before I go, but perhaps we'd better not call him from the organ. I also want a talk with the maid who assisted your butler in serving at the table the night Mr. Johnson was here. Will you call her, please, and leave us together?"

The waitress, Katie, was summoned; and, a trifle shy, she came in and stood before the detective.

"Sit down, Katie," he said kindly. "Now, I'm not going to ask you anything of great importance. Just try to remember anything Mr. Johnson may have said at the table that night. Anything at all. I don't suppose you pay much attention to the talk of the guests as you wait on them, but you may recollect something he said. Try now."

"I don't remember a thing," the girl declared, and she was so positive that Stone wondered at first if some one had forbidden her to speak.

But he discarded that idea when Katie, under the influence of his encouraging smiles, began to recollect a stray word or two.

"He said the house was pretty," she vouchsafed at last with a timid air.

"Yes," Stone egged her on. "And did he say anything about his own home—where he lived?"

"Oh, yes. He said he came from New York, but I don't think he lived there, because he said, 'What fine hotels there are in New York!'"

"To be sure. And maybe he mentioned the one he was staying at?"

"Yes, he did that! He said he left his trunk at the Vandermore, and that was why he didn't have any evening clothes to wear here. He said he didn't expect to stay here overnight—but he was glad he did because he liked the house so much."

"Just crazy over the house, wasn't he?"

"Oh, he was, sir! And he said if he ever had a voice in the matter he'd cut out a lot of trees. He thought there were too many."

"H'm. Did he expect to buy the house?"

"Oh, no, sir; he was just joking. You could tell that."

"Of course. Anything else?"

"No, sir. But one time I heard him mention Miss Rosemary's name."

"As if he knew her?"

"No, sir; more as if he wanted Mr. Vincent or Miss Vincent to tell him something about her. More as if he had heard of her——"

"I see. Most natural, I'm sure. Well, Katie, you gathered he had never been here before?"

"Oh, no, sir; I'm sure he hadn't."

"Well, run along, Katie. If you think of anything more you heard the gentleman say, you can let me know. Tell Mellish to bring you to me in such a case."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

With a shy little curtsey, Katie went

away, and Stone went in search of the master of the house. The organ music had stopped, so Stone was not surprised to find Vincent in his tower room.

The detective was really as much impressed and interested as the mysterious Johnson in the architecture and decoration of the house, but he felt he had no time to waste in idle enjoyment of its beauties.

"Wonderful place," he said to his host as he entered, after a knock at the closed door. "You found many secret hiding places or sliding panels, perhaps?"

"Several," Vincent told him. "Not so very secret, though. See, the one in this room opens by merely pressing this knob. And the knob is not hard to discern if any one looks closely for it."

"That's true," and Stone watched as Vincent turned the little knob and the panel slid smoothly and noiselessly back.

It exposed a recess with two or three shelves—merely a concealed cupboard large enough to contain half a dozen good-sized boxes which evidently held papers of value.

"This is my safe-deposit vault, Mr. Stone," Vincent said, smiling. "I have no other. I'm a man of simple habits, and all my papers or documents of any importance are in here. They are of no value to any one but myself. I mean they are of no money value. My stocks and bonds are at my bankers'. But here I keep my will, my deeds to this house, and my private correspondence."

"And the papers regarding Miss Rosemary's parentage," Stone said. "May I see those?"

"Certainly," and Vincent gave him the large bundles of his brother's letters.

"It is a distressing subject," Vincent said. "I have always known that Rosemary was Carl's adopted daughter, but I did not know, until young Collins learned it in France, that she is also his illegitimate child. I feel that I have my share of sorrow, Mr. Stone."

"You surely have, Mr. Vincent, and I realize the shock it was to you to learn this truth about your brother, just after the awful tragedy of your sister's death."

"Yes. And that is one reason why I cannot consent to have guests and laughter and gayety about my home. Rosemary is not without sensibilities, not without appreciation of the depth of my sorrow; but she is young, and she is of an exceptionally volatile, light-hearted disposition. And though, of course, she does not wish entertainment and frivolities now, yet she does want the companionship of her young friends, and I confess their very presence wears on my nerves so that I have to beg her to refrain from asking them here. You may not understand it, Mr. Stone, but I am a peculiar man, and the life of a hermit best suits my tastes and inclinations."

"I do understand, Mr. Vincent, and I see clearly that you could not live with any degree of peace and contentment with young vistors about."

"And if Rosemary were my own niece, I mean a legitimate Vincent, the case would be different. But, as things are, I feel that I am not overstepping my rights to insist on conducting my household as I wish."

"You certainly are not. I feel deeply sorry for you and your niece both. I could wish you had never learned the truth of her parentage."

"I heartily wish that, too; but in a way it brings her nearer to me to know that she was Carl's daughter, even though born out of wedlock."

"It is a hard case any way you look at it," and then Stone ended the interview and went back to his quarters at the inn.

Late that afternoon, Fibsy told of his investigation of the jungle known as Spooky Hollow.

"Gee! It's some place!" he ex-

claimed. "I'm glad I put on my old clothes, for I got well muddied up!"

"What did you find?"

"Mud, muck, and morass," returned the boy succinctly.

"Do you know what 'morass' means?" Stone asked, smiling.

"You bet I do. I lived near one at home when I was a kid. It's a sort of swamp that's mighty hard to walk on, and if it's morassy enough it sucks you down in, and you're a goner! That's what a morass is."

"Did you see any reason to think Mr. Johnson might have been sucked in?" Stone spoke seriously.

"No, F. S., no reason to think so. Of course, he might 'a' done so, but I can't see it. Why, even if he went strolling about the grounds and got stuck in the swamp, even got sucked in and sank down outa sight—why, that would have been in the eveninglike; and if he had done that he couldn't have killed the lady. It's impossible he could have done any strolling about after he killed her, 'long about seven o'clock in the morning. After that murder he had all he could do to hasten off to hide himself. And, anyway, I don't know's the morass is as bad as that. I tested it; I took off my coat—it was my old one—and I wrapped up a big stone in it. Then I flung it out into the softest-looking spot."

"What happened?"

"It went down; it was sucked in. But that was, after all, only a small bundle compared to a whole man. And, too, if he had found himself sinking in a place like that, he'd 'a' set up a yell, wouldn't he? And somebody'd heard him, wouldn't they? No, I can't connect up friend Johnson's disappearance with that quagmirey place. I don't say a man couldn't sink there, but I say there's no theory of the crime that would take him out there after the lady was dead."

"That's perfectly true. And even if he strolled round the grounds late that night, it must have been before midnight or the watchman would have seen him. And, too, I can imagine his strolling in the gardens, but late at night a man doesn't venture into such a messy place as you make out Spooky Hollow to be. See any spooks there?"

"Not a sign of one. It isn't such a bad place, you know. Except for a few mucky holes, it's fairly good going, and the tangle of vines and low evergreens is wild and weird in the extreme."

Stone suppressed a smile at the boy's diction, for he knew he was trying to improve his English, and if he erred occasionally on the side of stilted speech, it was wiser not to notice it.

"You heard the wild harp?"

"No, sir, I didn't, though I listened for it. Also, I looked good for wires, for I've been thinking it might be some rigged-up contraption. But nary sign of wires or æolian-harp strings or anything but trees and shrubs and scrubs and general rank undergrowth."

"Well, McGuire, how do you size up the whole thing?"

Fibsy was flattered; doubly so at being called by his surname and at having his opinion seriously asked. He considered before speaking, then said:

"It's no use, F. Stone. I can't size it up at all. It's too many for me. I've sometimes had glimmerings of wit about deducing things, but this time I'm up a stump for fair. But of one thing I am sure. That there wild and wicked harp must play, for so many people have heard it. From his nibs and Miss Rosy Posy, down to the lowest and littlest of the servant girls, most of them have heard it at one time or another.

"Except old Mellish. He vows he never has, and there's a twinkle in his eye whenever he speaks of it. So leave that harp to me. I'm going to find out about it—and, oh, gee! what a dunderhead I am! Why, I've got it now! I see through the wild harp! Well, I am a dumb-bell, that's what I am!"

"Suppose you stop your careful estimation of yourself and tell me your astounding discovery."

"Not just yet. Oh, give me a chance to make sure. But I'll tell you this, F. Stone, that harp is played by human fingers, and those same fingers are on the mitt of that dough-faced butler! That's who's responsible for them wailings and goings on of that phantom harp! Phantom, indeed! If Mellish is a phantom!"

"So you think he manipulates the harp. What for, may I ask?"

Fibsy was very serious. "Well, I should say as he rigged it up at first to tease his wife. She's a scary sort of thing and terribly afraid of ghosts. And having Spooky Hollow ready made for him, as you may say, I take it he just fixed up the harp arrangement for fun."

"And after Miss Vincent's death, you think he kept on with his joke?"

"I can't see any other way out. Some people have a perverted sense of humor, sir, and he may have thought it added to the dramatic side of things to have the harp wailing and moaning out there."

"Just how did he work it?"

"That's what I'm going to figger out. I can do it, I know."

"Well, go to it, Fibs. Now, I'm leaving for New York to-night, and I want you to stand by till I return. Don't do anything definite, but keep your eyes and ears open and learn anything you can."

"Yes, sir, and I'll get next to the harp player. And, mark my word, it'll turn out to be Mellish."

"Very well. Look into it if you like. But I can't feel that the harp playing, whether Mellish's work or not, has any real bearing on the case. Here's an address that will always reach me. I may have to go farther than New York. Go over to Greatlarch now and then, to keep in touch with what they are all doing. Otherwise, just hold the fort till I get back."

"Yes, Mr. Stone; but for the land's sake do write me or wire me if you get on to anything. I'm burning alive with curiosity."

"So am I, Fibsy," said Stone.

CHAPTER XVII.

FINCH'S STORY.

THE first thing Fleming Stone did on reaching New York was to visit the two jewelers whose addresses were on the cards given him by Homer Vincent. As he had expected, they both denied all knowledge of any one named Henry Johnson and declared he must have been an impostor. Both, also, referred to a man named Markheim, who had a secret process for manufacturing what are known as synthetic rubies. This man, they said, was an honest and honorable person, who made no claim for his goods beyond just what they were. He wanted to make imitation rubies and sell them for imitation rubies —that was all.

At Stone's request they willingly gave him Markheim's address, and the detective went at once to see him. He found the inventor a quiet, reserved, almost sullen sort of man. But he roused to a real pitch of fury when Stone told him of Henry Johnson's errand to Greatlarch in the interests of ruby manufacturing.

"What does he mean?" Markheim cried out. "He cannot make rubies! Has he my knowledge? Has he my secret? Why, sir, he is a terrible impostor!"

"But other men than you may have a formula, may have invented a process——"

"Nevertheless, he is an impostor. The fact that he used those two jewelers' names proves it! Those men gave me their cards as references, out of their good will and confidence in my

honesty. That's all they vouched for —my honesty and good faith. I told Mr. Vincent that."

"Did you see Miss Vincent?"

"No. I saw no lady there—only Mr. Homer Vincent, the owner of that great and wonderful house—Greatlarch the place is called."

"Yes. Now we must admit there's a queer proposition here. How did this Mr. Johnson get hold of those two cards——"

"But any one can get jewelers' cards! Pick them up from the counter or——"

"But is it not strange that he selected the very two that you used?"

"It is a coincidence, to be sure; but they are first-class and representative firms—it could be he would choose those—yet—yes, it is strange. Still, it is so. He gave the names to Mr. Vincent——"

"How did Mr. Vincent treat you, Mr. Markheim? I mean, was he interested in your project?"

"Not at all. He treated me most politely, even courteously, but he would have none of my business. He said his money was all invested in the sort of securities he liked best, and he would not think of making any changes. Moreover, he said he didn't wish to enter into any business proposition. He said such things wearied him, the financial details bored him, and he far preferred stocks or bonds where there was no responsibility or work involved. But he was very nice about it, and after our chat he invited me to remain for luncheon. I did so. My, what a house! I never saw its like! And the luncheon! It was fine, without being too elaborate or magnificent. I enjoyed myself, I can tell you!"

"You remember the butler?"

"Yes, somewhat. He seemed a character in his way, but his principal thought, I may say his life work, is quite evidently to smooth the path of his master and keep it free of all thorns or obstacles to his comfort."

"You are a good deal of a character reader. Mellish is just as you describe. Now, how did you size up Mellish's master?"

"As a first-class fine gentleman. The real thing, you understand. No shoddy or nouveau riche there. A gentleman of the old school, scholarly, refined, musical, and used to the very best of belongings and surroundings."

"And you saw no ladies at luncheon?"

"No; now that you mention it, I remember Mr. Vincent spoke of a sister and, I think, a niece, who were out for luncheon that day."

"Yes. Well, Mr. Markheim, I am obliged to you for this interview. Oh, by the way, you left two rubies with Mr. Vincent?"

"No, I did not. I had a few with me, and I showed them to him, but I didn't leave any with him."

"You didn't forget them or leave them by mistake?"

"I'm sure I did not. My rubies are of small worth compared to real stones, but also they have considerable market value, and I certainly did not leave any around carelessly. I left only those two cards. One was a little soiled, the other quite fresh."

"H'm. Now one last question. Do you konw any one who could possibly be interested in marketing synthetic rubies, even though he did not himself manufacture them? I don't mean Henry Johnson—but, say, some one whose initials are J. H.?"

"No, sir. I don't know of any one except myself who is interested in such things in any way. My process is my own invention, and I have carefully guarded my secret. I suppose there are others on the same quest, but I know none by name, nor do I think any one has the idea that I have. And I shall yet succeed. I have a patron who is

about ready to finance my work, and I mean to make good."

"I hope you will, Mr. Markheim; I sincerely do."

As Fleming Stone went away from the interview, his thoughts ran swiftly over the situation.

"It's very strange that two men should approach Homer Vincent on the same subject so near together. It's even more strange that they gave the same two references—that they both gave the jewelers' cards. Why didn't one of them merely give the firms' names? But perhaps he did. Perhaps Johnson only mentioned them as well-known jewelers, and Vincent, having their cards, gave them up as memoranda. At any rate, Markheim is an honest man, and, so far as I can see now, Johnson is a fraud. Yet maybe he only wanted to conceal his real name until he learned if Mr. Vincent would put his money in the business. Of course, these inventors with secrets keep mighty close about their affairs. But I still suspect Johnson, as he called himself, of double dealing somehow, and I must track him down. Guess I'll try the Vandermore next."

The room clerk at the big hotel was not anxious to help in the search for an unknown name with initials J. H., but, impressed by the hint of a police investigation, he turned over to Stone the lists of names for the dates he mentioned.

Allowing that the man had registered a few days before he went up to Vermont, Fleming Stone set resolutely to work and found no less than six names, during those days, whose initials were J. H. But running down those names was fairly easy, though tedious; and a few hours' time showed him that two were respectable citizens of Boston, one was a visiting Englishman, and one a San Francisco millionaire. This left him with a James Harrison of Mobile, Alabama, and a John Haydock, of Chicago. A hasty telegram discovered Mr. Harrison to be a clergyman attending a convention, and Stone was left with only one more chance for success in his search.

Following a sudden flash of inspiration, he went to the bureau of missing persons. To be sure, Haydock, if he were the man, need not be missing from his own home—but then, again, he might.

The officials at the bureau were most kind and helpful and, after a look at some out-of-town records, told Stone that John Haydock was a Chicago broker, was mysteriously missing, and the police had been searching for him several weeks with no iota of success.

"There's my man!" Stone cried. "Now where is he?"

But he said this only to his inner consciousness, not yet ready to let the New York or Chicago police in on the job. He had his own interests in the case to look out for, and, as it was a most unusual and peculiar case, he concluded to carry it a little further by himself. Getting all possible details of Haydock, Stone made for a long-distance telephone and called the office of John Haydock, in Chicago. At last he was in touch with one Robert Finch, who said he was the chief and confidential clerk of John Haydock and was eager for news of him."

"Will you come to New York," Stone asked, "or must I go out to Chicago?"

"I'll come right over," Finch promised. "I'm sure it's the better plan. My, I'm excited at even hearing some word of Mr. Haydock! I can hardly wait to reach you, but I realize you can't say much over the telephone."

But Stone was not so elated as the Chicago man was. It was a hundred to one that John Haydock should be the man he was after. Finch had said Haydock was a broker and had no interest in jewels or precious stones. But Haydock's interest might have been a

secret one. Stone began to think now that Haydock was not the ruby manufacturer, but merely the representative of an inventor. In this case, the broker would naturally keep the matter secret from even his confidential clerk. At any rate, Fleming Stone determined to try very hard to connect the missing Chicago man with the J. H. of the umbrella.

Too impatient to wait for Finch's word on that subject, Stone went to the haberdashery where the umbrella had been bought. They could not trace the purchaser, as Stone had not the umbrella with him, but they declared the monogram had not been put on by them. Also, as Stone described and drew a rough sketch of the letters, they entirely agreed with him that the order of the two letters was J H and not H J. This satisfied Stone that the caller at Greatlarch used a fictitious name, whatever else his claims to honesty might be.

"And a clever duck, too," Stone mused; "used a name with the letters the other way, so his umbrella would seem to be marked right. Shows an ingenious mind, and so, probably, a crook mind. The fact that he's a well-known Chicago broker is no real guarantee of his honesty and integrity. Anyhow I've checked up some of those rash statements I made to Mr. Vincent and young Collins. Let me see; I said the man who called was not Henry Johnson, his initials were not H. J., and his business was not about making synthetic rubies.

"I think that's all right, so far. But I said, further, that he didn't murder Miss Anne nor steal her ruby. Some work to prove that! Guess I'll await the Finch person and see where he lands me up."

But his waiting hours were fraught with wild and hazy conjectures. Where had John Haydock hidden himself? Why had he gone to Greatlarch on a secret errand? Did his whole ruby proposition merely cloak some other and greater intention? Did he go there with the sole purpose of killing Anne Vincent? If so, why?

Again came the idea of his being an old suitor of the lady; perhaps he had sworn to kill her because of—pshaw! all too melodramatic. Miss Vincent, as he pictured her from all he had heard, was a mild and inoffensive lady with no dark past; yet who could tell as to other people's dark pasts? And the stranger had known Miss Vincent before; the man Prout had disclosed that fact.

Then say it was the theft of the ruby that took him there. Ah, that was a little more plausible. Say he knew Miss Vincent of old, say he knew of the great ruby, and so he went there, using an assumed name and taking his time to compass his design. Probably he had no intention of murder, but that was necessary to save his own neck. Stone had said that the man who called himself Johnson didn't commit the murder or steal the ruby, but—the detective had learned a few things since then.

The next day Finch came. Stone had rooms for them both at the Vandermore, and, as soon as the young man could get freshened up and eat some luncheon, they started their confab.

"Begin at the beginning," requested Stone. "Tell me all you know of John Haydock, from your very first acquaintance."

"It won't be a very long tale," Robert Finch replied as he lighted his cigar. "About three years ago I chanced to hear, through a friend, that Mr. Haydock wanted a clerk. I applied for the position and got it. I tried my best to make good, and I did. He advanced my salary several times and looked upon me as his trustworthy and confidential clerk. I gave him my best efforts, and since his disappearance I have carried on the business just as he always did. It's largely routine work, or I couldn't

have left the office just now. But I have an excellent and able assistant who will look after things, and I felt my duty was here, to find John Haydock, if possible. Where is he?"

"I've no idea. But we'll come to that later. Tell me more about the man. Describe him, please. Was he dark?"

"Dark? I should say he was! I never knew a darker white man. But that did not mean he was anything but white in his dealings. As honest as the day, just rather than generous, and so silent and reserved about his own affairs as to be considered secretive. He never chatted with me. He talked over the necessary business matters, he was pleasant, amiable, courteous, but never chummy or confidential."

"All right so far. Now tell me about the day he went away. Where did he say he was going?"

"To New York. Said he had worked hard and had earned a vacation. Said he would be gone maybe a week, but not more. Said I needn't write unless something of unusual importance turned up, which wasn't likely, for I know as much about the business as he does."

"What did he take for luggage?"

"I don't know. He rarely went off on vacation trips, but when he did he took little luggage—probably a large suit case and an ordinary overnight bag."

"You mean a suit case too big to cart around much?"

"Yes, that's what I mean. He'd check that somewhere and go around with a kitbag. At least, that's only my supposition, but it's probably about right."

"And you never heard from him after he left you?"

"Not one word."

"Didn't that surprise you?"

"For a week or so it didn't, and after that you bet it did! Why, I've been more and more surprised each day! And surprised isn't the word! I'm utterly dumfounded, flabbergasted, stunned, shocked, down and out! I don't know where I am at! And if you can give me a hint or a clew I'll follow it to the ends of the earth. Why, quite aside from my business acquaintance with him, I like the man. As I said, he's not very friendly in a chummy way, but he's a strong, stanch, loyal heart, and I'm grieving quite as much as I'm wondering."

"You have no doubts, then, of his integrity of soul?"

"Oh, come now, integrity of soul means a lot. I don't know Mr. Haydock well enough to talk like that about him. But I've no doubt of his business honesty or his honorable dealing toward me. After that I know too little of him to discuss him. Why, you've no idea how reticent he was as to himself—personally, I mean."

"Where did he come from? Where was he born?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. It isn't that I was afraid to ask him of such matters, but we never met outside of business hours; and, as he was not informatively inclined, it would have been silly for me to pester him with questions."

"I see. And you've no idea whether he lived in Chicago all his life, or——"

"Oh, yes, I know that much. He came to live in Chicago about five years ago——"

"From where?"

"Don't know that, except I have a dim idea it was from the West."

"Was he like a Westerner?"

"Not specially. He looked more like a foreigner, with his dark hair and sallow skin. But he was one hundred per cent American, so far as I could see."

"Well, details about him don't seem to get us anywhere. Did you ever surmise that he had any secrets in his life? Any hobby he was following up, or any love affair?"

"I never heard or saw anything to

base any such supposition or surmise on," Robert Finch replied slowly.

"You're holding back something," Stone said intuitively.

"No, that's the exact truth. His only hobby that I can think of was writing in his diary. He rarely did any of it at the office, but the few times he did he worked at it like a man engrossed in his occupation."

"Where is his diary?"

"He always kept it locked up——"

"But you know where."

"If I do, I shall not tell until I have more reason than I have how to think I shall never see Mr. Haydock again. What sort of confidential clerk should I be if I gave up his private papers because he went away and stayed a few weeks without writing to me? And, now, Mr. Stone, suppose you tell me what you know, and why you want to find him."

Robert Finch was a good-looking, earnest-faced young man, of a type to be found by hundreds in the great business offices of our cities. But he was rather above the average in his appearance of sincerity and fealty to his trust. Stone sized him up for a faithful custodian of his employer's secrets if he knew them, or of his private papers if he had them.

In as few words as possible the detective told Finch the story of the man who went to Greatlarch and called himself Henry Johnson. He told of the various matters that pointed to this man's really being John Haydock, and, though at first unwilling to believe it, Finch was finally convinced that it must be true.

"That umbrella!" he exclaimed as Stone described it minutely. "I know it well! I ought to, for I gave it to him myself more than a year ago, on his birthday. I thought he'd like it, and I guess he did, only—well, he seemed to think I was a bit presumptuous to do it. He made me feel a little ashamed, and I never offered him a present again. However, he often carries it, and I think he likes it."

"Would he use plain black, rubber-backed brushes and only moderately fine underwear?"

"Yes, exactly. He had money enough, and he was not at all parsimonious; but he was—well, I think frugal is the word. He was always well dressed but not at all extravagant."

"All the things in his kitbag were brand-new," Stone vouchsafed.

Finch smiled. "Probably found himself at low tide when he started away. Didn't like to go to a decent hotel with ragged things in his bag, so he stocked up. Yes, I have to confess it all sounds like Haydock, and, as your people mention his dark coloring, I can't see any reason to doubt that it was he who went to Greatlarch, and who introduced himself as Henry Johnson. Why, I cannot imagine."

"You never heard him speak of any one named Vincent?"

"Never. But I never heard him speak of anybody outside our business lists."

"What did he do evenings?"

"He lived in a good bachelor apartment, and he went into good society. He was moderate in everything. He went to the theater and concerts now and then, he went to dinners and all that, but he wasn't what you'd call a regular society man. I dare say lots of his evenings he spent quietly by himself. But I never asked him, of course; I'm judging only by my general knowledge of him, and from such few remarks as he might casually drop while we talked business.

"Where do you suppose he got hold of this ruby idea?"

"I don't know. But if somebody put it up to him as a good money-making scheme, and if he thought it was, I can imagine his going up there to interest a millionaire——"

"And using a false name?"

"Possibly."

"And stealing a real ruby and murdering a good lady?"

Finch spoke cautiously when he replied. "No, I can't say I imagine his doing that. I can only repeat I don't know the man, and I can't say what he would or wouldn't do."

"Mellish, the butler—who, by the way, is no common personality—says that the man he calls Henry Johnson has the face of a murderer."

Finch smiled. "Is there such a thing," he said, "as the face of a murderer? As I said, Haydock's face is as dark as a Spaniard's, but that doesn't imply a dark heart. I've been told a murderer oftenest has a clear, bright blue eye."

"I've been told that, too; in fact, I'm ready to say there is no such thing as the typical face of a murderer. And I believe that Mellish founded his suspicion on the fact of this man's very dark effect."

"How about suspecting the butler himself of the theft and of the murder? Is he entirely free from suspicion?"

"I think so. There's no clew or evidence against him. In fact, there's none against anybody but Haydock, as I shall now call him, for I am convinced of his identity. But it does seem to be a clear case against him. He appears from nowhere, gives a wrong name, offers a business proposition which is clearly a faked one, spends the night, and before dawn disappears. Almost as soon as he is gone, a murdered woman is found, and an enormous gem is missing. He is never seen again, and his whereabouts cannot be traced. What's the answer?"

"It looks black," conceded Finch. "You know the Chicago police have been hunting him, but of course they never traced him to Vermont."

"Then that proves he went there secretly. Had he gone with no atempt at concealment, he could easily have been traced. I'm sorry, Mr. Finch, but every detail we learn from each other seems to draw the net still tighter round the man who was your employer."

"And how do you think he got away? Aside from the locked door—and I cannot see how he had a mechanical device handy to turn that key from the outside when he could not have foreseen the exact circumstances that would come to him—aside from that, how did he get away from Hilldale, on a cold winter night, without hat or coat——"

"Oh, that he might have managed easily—the getting out of Hilldale, I mean. But I don't yet understand that locked door. And I do think that the solving of the mystery hangs on that."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TERRIBLE TRUTH.

WILLINGLY Robert Finch accepted Stone's invitation to return to Greatlarch with him. The clerk felt that he must do all in his power to ferret out the mystery of his employer's disappearance, and surely his way lay in the direction of Hilldale.

On the journey up Stone had told his companion of Fibsy, his young assistant, so Finch was not surprised to see the red-headed lad waiting for them on the steps of the inn.

"I have some finds," announced Fibsy. "Have you any, F. Stone?"

"Well, yes, Terence, I think I may say I have, though I haven't yet quite made out what they mean."

After the three were settled down in Stone's sitting room, and after Stone had told the boy a general sum-up of what he had learned from Finch and from the jewelers, Fibsy took his turn at recital.

"Well, sir," he announced, "I found out who plays that spook harp, and as I just felt sure, F. Stone, it's none other than Friend Butler."

"Mellish?"

"The same. He has a wireless telephone——"

"From the house?"

"Yep, from the house, and—well, I can't 'zactly explain it, but it's this way: He connected a phonograph with a wireless sending set in his workshop, and then he transmits the music to a large horn connected with an amplifier which is concealed in a tree down in that Spooky Hollow."

"I understand," Stone said. "You needn't try to explain the details of the mechanism, Fibs; I see how it is done. But Mellish never contrived that himself!"

"That's what I think, F. S. I think his nibs is at the back of it——"

"Mr. Vincent! Nonsense! More likely that chauffeur; he's a clever mechanician. However, I've felt all along that the wild harp had nothing to do with the real mystery or the tragedy; so work on that, Terence, if it amuses you; but, if you've any news of real importance, let's have it."

"Well, sir, I have. I found the bottle that belongs to that atomizer thing."

"You did! Now that's something worth while. Let's see it."

Proudly the boy produced a small vial. It was half full of an antiseptic preparation, and its label bore the address of a Chicago chemist.

"That's his," Robert Finch said at once. "That's Mr. Haydock's. I've often seen him use it in his atomizer during business hours, when his catarrh troubled him. Where did it come from?"

Stone looked at Fibsy.

"Now that's the queer part," the boy said. "I burgled Greatlarch, you——"

"How?" Stone asked.

"I took a chance when Mr. Vincent was playing on his big organ so hard he wouldn't have noticed the German army if they'd marched through him! Yes, sir, he was just absorbed; he was —what you call it?—improverising; yes, that's it, improverising. And I slipped into his tower room—it's never locked—and I investigated that panel. You know he told us himself how to open that panel."

"Yes, McGuire."

"Well, sir, I felt sure there was more to it than he told us about. And there was. By pokin' around good and plenty I found another little, weeny knob, and I pressed it, and there was another secret panel—you know, inside the first one, 'way at the back part."

"And this bottle was in there?"

"Oh, Lord, no, sir. That bottle wasn't in there! I got my yarn mixed up, I'm that excited! No, sir, that bottle was in Mr. Vincent's own little medicine chest in his bathroom, just a-settin' there."

"In Mr. Vincent's chest? Then what has it to do with the Johnson man?"

"Well, it's a bottle of stuff that could belong to that atomizer thing. It's a Chicago prescription, so maybe it ain't Mr. Vincent's; and it was sorta hidden away at the back, so I take it it was meant to be concealed."

"McGuire, your zeal has run away with you." Fleming Stone smiled good-naturedly. "More likely one of the housemaids saw this on Mr. Johnson's washstand, and, thinking it belonged to Mr. Vincent, she put it in his bathroom."

"Maybe, sir." Fibsy's freckled face changed expression. "Only Mr. Vincent hasn't one snipjack of catarrhal trouble. I asked Mellish. And the other man had. And here's the Chicago label."

"But what are you getting at? You can't mean that Mr. Vincent concealed this thing purposely——"

"Well, somebody did. That Chicago bottle, that just fits up with the atomizer, has no right to be in the back part of Mr. Vincent's medicine chest."

"That's so, Fibs," and Stone looked

more thoughtful. "Well, what was in the back part of the inner secret cupboard?"

"Why, in there, sir, there was nothing but a lot of keys and tags and such things."

"What do you mean by 'such things?' "

"Well, there was a key to what is most likely a safe-deposit box; you know how they look. Then there was the key to the wine closet; I know, for it was labeled. And a key to the big organ, a duplicate, I suppose. And an old-fashioned watch key—oh, quite a lot of keys, mostly tagged with brass tags or pasteboard labels."

"Any of definite importance to us?"

"There was, sir. That one, though, wasn't a key at all."

"Go on."

"It was a check—a metal trunk check, from the Hotel Vandermore."

"Well, any one can have a check from any hotel, can't he?"

"Oh, F. Stone, I thought it was a check Johnson had for his trunk, you know, and he brought it here, and—somehow he—it had got hidden away in there—and I sent for it——"

"You didn't! Fibs, you're crazy! Whom did you send?"

"I sent Prout, the taxi man——"

"Good Lord, child, I'll never dare go off and leave you again! It's probably a suit case with Mr. Vincent's dress clothes, that he keeps in New York to go to a party in now and then."

But Terence McGuire was so evidently on the verge of tears that Stone tried to cheer him up.

"Never mind, old chap," he said, "I'll take the blame. If it's Mr. Vincent's property, as it must be, I'll tell him I sent for it in an overzealous endeavor to find a clew!"

But Fibsy would not be comforted. He felt he had done a crazy, unpardonable act, and Stone knew he would brood over it for a time.

"All right, little chum," the detective said, "you sit here a while and think out some more bright clews to follow up, and I'll take a run over to Greatlarch."

Though this speech sounded sarcastic to Finch, it comforted Fibsy, for he knew that, when his chief jollied him to this extent, he was not displeased with him. So he sat thinking, while the other two started off for the Vincent home.

First of all, Stone went for the butler, as that worthy admitted the pair.

"So you're the spook that plays the harp, are you, Mellish?" he said, and, though his tone was light, he spoke in earnest.

"Well, yes, sir; and yet I may say I see no harm in it."

"No harm, of course, Mellish; but you never rigged up that contraption alone. Who did it for you? The chauffeur?"

"Not he! He hasn't brains enough to play a harmonica! No, sir, I—I just did it by myself—to tease my old woman, you see."

"And you turn it on and off as you like?"

"Yes, sir. See, here's the thing."

Deeply interested, Stone and Finch followed the butler into a small entry where, sure enough, was rigged up a rather elaborate bit of mechanism.

"Mellish," said Stone sternly, "you never did that yourself in this world! Moreover, only a very ingenious inventor could have done it. And I know who it was. It was Homer Vincent! He's the man who rigged up the wireless and the phonograph, and he's the man who makes the records on his organ! Too easy, Mellish. Own up."

"Well, sir—I may not be free of speech——"

"I've heard you use that phrase before. I know what you mean by it now. You mean you're not free to tell——"

"Yes, sir, that's it. My master, he's a man of strict orders, and I am not allowed to babble, sir."

"Your master is a strange jumble of talents," and Finch looked curiously at the wires and strings of the device.

"Mr. Vincent is a man of luxuriant temperament, sir," and Mellish raised his hand as if to ward off further remarks. "And nothing disturbs him more than to have me chatter. So, if you will excuse me, gentlemen——" and Mellish simply faded away.

As Stone had supposed, he found Homer Vincent in his tower room, and, unannounced, he led Finch there.

"I know you will be glad to meet this man, Mr. Vincent," he said, "for he is the confidential clerk of the man we have been calling Henry Johnson, but whose name, as it turns out, is John Haydock."

Vincent looked up interestedly.

"Take seats, gentlemen," he said pleasantly, and then acknowledged Stone's more definite introduction of Robert Finch.

"John Haydock," he repeated, and it was plain to be seen from his manner that the name meant nothing to him. "And why did your employer, my dear sir, come to me under an assumed name?"

"That's what I'm here to find out," returned Finch, not so much bluntly as determinedly. "Suppose, Mr. Vincent, we all put our cards on the table and see what conclusions we can come to."

"By all means, Mr. Finch. Only I may say I have already put all my cards on the table. If I haven't, ask any questions you like."

"I'll do that, then," Stone said quickly. "Why did you not tell us that you were responsible for the music of the wild harp?"

Vincent gave a little smile.

"That's true, Mr. Stone. I haven't been quite frank about that. But it is a case of in for a penny, in for a pound. I rigged up that thing merely for the amusement and bewilderment of my friends and my servants. There were stories of hauntings and weird sounds and sights in the wild garden they have named Spooky Hollow, and I thought I'd just give them a jolt now and then. And, later, when it began to affect my household and family, I still kept on, to surprise and astound them. Mellish helped me; he turned on the instrument when I ordered him to. And he enjoyed his wife's thrills at the seemingly supernatural music.

"Then, Mr. Stone, when tragedy came to me, I didn't feel like revealing the secret of my joking deceit, so I let the matter rest, even using it now and then when I felt inclined. I am a strange man, Mr. Stone; many call me a freak or an eccentric. But, really, all I ask is to be let alone, all I wish to do is to enjoy myself in my own way, which never interferes with the doings of any one else. I am perhaps a slave to my creature comforts; I own I like luxurious living and beautiful appointments; but surely those are innocent hobbies if a man can afford them."

"Entirely so," Stone said. "Now, Mr. Vincent, we are striving to find this Haydock, as we now call him. You never heard of John Haydock?"

"Never, Mr. Stone. Who is he?"

"A Chicago broker. Will you please let me see those cards he brought you?"

"Certainly. Here they are."

Stone scrutinized them and noted that one was considerably soiled, the other comparatively fresh.

"Mr. Vincent," he said, "these cards were given you by Mr. Markheim, who came first to see you about synthetic rubies—not by Mr. Johnson, as he then called himself."

"I dare say." Vincent spoke disinterestedly. "I don't remember saying that Johnson left the cards here. I only said Johnson gave those references, and

I gave the cards to the detectives as a memorandum of the jewelers' addresses."

"I see. Now, as John Haydock was not interested in making rubies, so Mr. Finch tells me, and as he gave you a wrong name, do you not think the man's motive in coming here was something other than ruby making?"

"Good heavens, man, of course I think so. He came here to kill my sister, to steal her ruby, and perhaps to kill me, too! Of course, his ruby story was a blind, probably in order to persuade my sister to exhibit her wonderful jewel."

"But I think he knew you before he came, Mr. Vincent."

"Impossible, or he would never have given the wrong name."

"Perhaps you knew him by both names."

"I never knew him by either name. He was a total stranger to me. They say he knew of my broken leg, some years since, that he knew of my sister and my niece. These things may all be so, but he never knew me, nor did I know him."

"Well, here we are!" and a young voice announced the arrival of Fibsy, accompanied by Prout, the taxi man, lugging an enormous suit case. They were followed by Rosemary and young Collins, who were anxious to learn the cause of the excitement.

Prout set down the suit case, which bore the initials J. H., and Finch said at once, "That is Mr. Haydock's."

"Aha," said Fibsy, with a side wink at Stone, knowing full well that if the thing turned out to be of importance, Stone would be the first to praise him.

"It's locked," said Stone. "Call your butler, please, Mr. Vincent."

Homer Vincent pressed a button, and Stone dismissed the taxi man, saying he would be paid for his time and trouble later on.

"We don't want him about," he said. "This may be of importance as evidence."

Without asking permission, he ordered Mellish to bring a wrench and hammer, and in a few moments the suit case was opened. It appeared to be filled with the ordinary clothing of a plain business man, and nothing of interest was seen until near the bottom they found a small, thick book.

"That is Mr. Haydock's diary," Finch said. "Give it to me."

Without a word, Stone handed it over, but he gave a look at Finch that said volumes.

In a moment Finch was absorbed in the contents.

"I feel," he said, "that, though this is not meant for other eyes than his own, yet, because of the stigma already cast upon him, and his inability to speak for himself, this diary—some parts of it, at least—should be read aloud."

"By all means," said Homer Vincent, seeming truly interested at last. "Let us hear it."

The portions that Finch read were written during the days just preceding Haydock's late departure from Chicago for New York. And, to the amazement of everybody, he had gone to New York, and from there to Hilldale, to see Rosemary Vincent!

It transpired that five years ago, at the time of Carl Vincent's death, Haydock had been Carl Vincent's clerk. He had seen and admired Rosemary, though she had never specially noticed him. He was eight or ten years older than the girl, but he had never outgrown the infatuation that he felt for her. He determined to work hard and earn a fortune, and when this was accomplished he proposed to go in search of Rosemary and try to win her for his own. All this he did, and the diary detailed his journey to New York, his outfitting himself with new clothing, and his departure for Vermont. He

had left the diary in his large suit case, checked at his hotel, and it was the check for this that Fibsy had found in Homer Vincent's second secret panel and had sent down to the hotel by Prout.

The advent of John Haydock was explained. There was no further doubt about that. Nobody could question the sincerity of those entries in the diary that told of his never-forgotten admiration and his hopes of yet winning sweet Rosemary Vincent.

Tears came to the girl's eyes as she heard the simple, homely tribute to her charms. She almost wished she could see and thank the man who admired and loved her like that.

Bryce Collins looked stupefied. Who was this man coming to seek his Rosemary? But even these thoughts were quickly supplanted by Fleming Stone's stern query: "How came the check for this suit case in your secret cupboard, Mr. Vincent?"

"Bless my soul, I don't know!" and the man looked utterly bewildered. "I can only suspect some of my servants—or some intruder——"

"The same one that put the Chicago man's bottle of medicine in your bathroom, maybe," suggested Fibsy.

"Here's another reference to your father, Miss Vincent," Finch said as he skimmed through the diary.

The item referred to some papers of Carl Vincent that Haydock only recently had found. He mentioned coming across an old box that he had thought contained merely old checkbooks; but, on turning them out, he had discovered underneath a packet of papers which he thought would be of interest to Rosemary, and he proposed to take them to her.

"Where are they?" asked the girl, looking wonderingly about.

"That's what I'd like to know," her uncle said. "I, too, am interested in anything pertaining to my brother, Rosemary."

"Yes, uncle, of course you are. Oh, where do you suppose Mr. Haydock is? Uncle, the man who wrote that diary never could have killed Antan!"

"It doesn't seem so, certainly," said Vincent, seeming nonplused. "Mr. Stone, here's a big problem for you now. Can you work it out?"

"I can!" cried Fibsy. "At least, I can help. I can tell you where Mr. Haydock is—probably."

The lad looked solemn, and Stone gazed at him curiously. Was he getting greater than his master? This was no feeling of jealousy or rivalry on the part of the older detective. He loved the boy and took pride in all his successes. But he was afraid that Fibsy, in his eagerness and intrepidity, might overreach himself.

"He's down in Spooky Hollow," he said with such a lugubrious face that they all felt horrified.

"Sure, McGuire?" asked Stone.

"No, sir, I ain't quite sure, but I don't see where else he can be. First off"—he looked round solemnly at his hearers—"there's a fearful quagmire down in that hollow. It's about six feet from the east border. And, you remember, that cigarette holder was found on the east lawn."

"What's that got to do with it?" exclaimed Collins.

"Well, now," Fibsy went on, too earnest to note the interruption, "I tried tying up a stone in my coat, and it sunk in the place. Yesterday, after dark, I"—he seemed to hesitate to tell of his deed—"I bought a whole pig of the butcher, as big a one as I could manage, and I pushed that in. It went down in the quicksand of that swamp in less time that it takes to tell it! The muck is all dark brown and quivering. The approach to it is slippery and treacherous, but there it is. Now listen here.

"After Mr. Vincent left that man to

go to bed that night, where'd he go? He never prowled the house all night long. He went out in the grounds and he—he fell into that place. As he went down, he flung his cigarette holder as far as he could, as a sort of guide to where he met his death."

"That's why he had no hat or coat," Stone said musingly. "Probably stepped down off the veranda, not meaning to stay out long."

"Poor fellow!" said Vincent. "How horrible! I had no idea that it was as bad as that! I've been intending to have it drained and dried. I shall certainly do so. At least, we can avert another such tragedy. But do not avoid the issue, gentlemen. Did not Haydock necessarily come to his death after he had killed my sister?"

"Mr. Vincent," Stone said, "you know I told you the man who came to see you was not named Johnson, was not initialed H. J., did not come to discuss making rubies, did not kill your sister, and did not steal her ruby? To all of those statements I adhere."

"You do! Then find the murderer. Find the man who kliled my sister. Can you do that?"

"I think I can," and Stone nodded his head thoughtfully. "Listen, please, all of you. This murder of Miss Vincent is in every respect the worst I have ever known—the most fiendishly contrived and the most brutally carried out. The murderer is—Homer Vincent."

Vincent stared at the speaker, but smiled a little indulgently, as one might at a harmless maniac.

"Then," Fibsy spoke in an awed whisper, "he's a double-dyed dastard, for he murdered John Haydock, too."

"What?" cried Finch.

"Yes, he did. Out there beside the quagmire is a piece of planking that has footprints on it. Those are Mr. Vincent's prints, but, Lord, there's enough else to prove everything!"

"There is indeed," Stone added, "and here is the motive. After you found the second secret panel, McGuire, I thought there might be a third. There is. The tiniest speck of a pinhead knob, when pressed sidewise, opens a third concealed recess, and in it I have found, first, Miss Vincent's ruby, now Miss Rosemary's property; and what is even more valuable to her—is this."

He gave her a folded paper, while Homer Vincent sat as if turned to stone.

"You fiend!" he said to Stone. "You devil incarnate!"

"Keep those epithets for yourself," the detective said coolly. "Are you going to confess?"

"I am." Homer Vincent's voice rang out. "I'm going to tell the truth for the last time in my life. I did kill John Haydock, because he knew the secret of my niece's birth. Knew that she is the legitimate daughter of my brother and his wife, Mary Leslie. They were married twice, really—the first time secretly, because her mother objected. Her little girl was born and baptized, also secretly, but entirely legally, in France, and put in an asylum there, because Mary's mother would not have forgiven them had she known of it."

"Later, the mother died, and my brother and his wife were married again publicly. Then when their baby was born and died, they adopted from the asylum the little Rosemary, who was their own legitimate child. But, when my brother died, five years ago, and left me trustee of Rosemary's fortune, I was tempted and fell. I took it all myself, bought this splendid house, and have lived here in the luxury I love ever since.

"When Haydock came—yes, the ruby story I made up entirely myself; Haydock never spoke to me of rubies—he talked only of Rosemary's parentage, so I, remembering the other ruby man, pretended Johnson came on the same

business. He told me himself that he sent in his name as Johnson, for fear I would refuse to see Haydock. Lord, I had forgotten him entirely! Well, when he told me that he knew all about Rosemary and threatened to expose the whole story unless I forced her to marry him, I couldn't see any way to keep my beautiful home and to save the girl from a loveless marriage except by putting Haydock out of the way.

"It was not difficult. We strolled in the garden, went down to inspect Spooky Hollow, and—I pushed him in. He struggled like fury, flinging his arms about. You know the more they struggle, the quicker they sink."

"And your sister?" said Stone, hardly able to overcome his repugnance at speaking to this creature—scarcely human, he seemed.

"Well," and Vincent looked reminiscent. "I didn't want to—but she declared she was going to tell the truth about the girl. I couldn't have that. Can't you understand?" He spoke almost pettishly. "I couldn't live elsewhere than in this house, and, of course, I couldn't live here if Rosemary took all her money. I have no money at all. I spent all mine for this place; it is what my brother left that runs the establishment."

"How did you kill your sister?" asked Stone, his dark eyes fixed inexorably on Vincent's face.

"That you will never know," and with a smile of diabolical cunning Vincent slipped into his mouth a small object which Stone knew to be a poison tablet. But it was too late to stop him, and Stone thought pityingly of Rosemary. Perhaps that death for her uncle was easiest for the niece.

And while there was yet life in the body of the wicked man Stone shouted the truth at him:

"I do know. You stabbed her yourself, after the door was burst open. You gave her extra sleeping drops to be sure of her sleeping late in the morning. When they couldn't waken her, you broke through the door, rushed in, and, bending over the living woman, stabbed her to the heart, and with the protection of her long, heavy bed curtains you were able to draw out the knife unseen. The knife you probably threw into the quicksand. Also, you stole her ruby! Am I right?"

And with a smile, still horrible, even demoniacal, the dying man murmured, "You are right."

He never spoke again.

At a gesture from Stone, Bryce Collins led Rosemary away.

"Don't cry so, dearest," he said tenderly. "Such a fiend isn't worth your tears. Come, I will take you at once to my mother. Oh, darling, just think. There is no reason now why she won't receive you!"

"Thank Heaven for my birthright," said the girl reverently. "And," she added, looking into his eyes, "for your love, dear heart."

"My beloved," he whispered as he held her close, "as you know, I wanted you with any name or no name, but I am glad—*glad*, dear, that we can give our children a goodly heritage. Bless you, my Rosemary, my darling!"

THE END.

BOOTBLACK'S STRANGE REQUEST

ONE of the strangest requests ever received by the City Clerk of Orange, New Jersey, was reported a short time ago as having come from several Orange bootblacks, requesting that they be taxed. The request was sent by mail and read as follows: "We hereby petition your honorable body to tax us $25 a year for a license."

Mysteries of the District Attorney's Office

THE PATRICK CASE

by Edward H. Smith

Many of the stories of mysteries from the district attorney's office, of which this is the first, will be partly familiar to readers with long memories. Many others will strike no chords of recollection because they belong to the secret archives of the prosecutors. They are the strange and hidden cases which are not prosecuted, which do not reach the newspapers, and which are, perhaps, the deepest mysteries of all.

ON the morning of September 24, 1900, one David L. Short, a lawyer's assistant, laid a check for twenty-five thousand dollars on the counter of S. M. Swenson & Son's bank, at No. 61 Broadway, New York. It was signed "W. M. Rice" and drawn to the order of Albert T. Patrick.

The teller looked at a check of this size with more than casual attention. He knew, without reference, that William Marsh Rice, whose signature he recognized, was good for many times twenty-five thousand dollars. This eighty-four-year-old, ailing capitalist was rated at between five million and ten million dollars, made in Texas lands. His balance was always in the neighborhood of one hundred thousand dollars and his credit was of the kind that causes bankers to pay without question. But the teller was careful, none the less.

He turned the check over and studied the endorsement. It was signed in a clear, small hand—Albert T. Patrick. The clerk turned the check again and looked at the face. There was something amiss. Whoever had penned the check had written "Abert," without the "l," and not Albert. It was perhaps only a slip, a mere triviality, something of no consequence whatever, but the young bank employee could not take chances. He turned the check over to an officer of the bank, and this gentleman politely told the presenter that, as there was a discrepancy between the face and the endorsement, additional and protective signatures on the back would be required.

This tiny blunder, the nervous omission of a single letter from a common name, was the flaw that brought about the exposure of one of the most mysterious murder conspiracies with which the district attorney's office of New

York has ever dealt, the famous Patrick case. Albert T. Patrick, the impoverished, lean, indomitable attorney who was the center of this celebrated case, has been tried, convicted, reprieved, commuted, and pardoned long ago. For all the writer knows, he is dead and forever silent; but the inscrutability of the Marsh killing remains. For the criminal and legal technician, there is hardly an affair of murder on all the calendars which may be said to compare with it. Its main questions still smolder under a smoke of doubt, and all of two and twenty years have not cleared it in the least.

When David Short walked out of Swenson's bank that warm fall morning, he went directly to the office of Albert Patrick and told the lawyer what had happened. Patrick immediately telephoned to the apartment of William Marsh Rice, at No. 500 Madison Avenue, the old Berkshire Apartment Building, got Charles F. Jones, the millionaire's confidential valet, on the wire, and instructed him to say that the check was valid in case the bank should call up. Patrick then supplied the back of the check with the confirmatory endorsements and sent Short back to Swenson's. The head of the bank was now called into consultation. He compared the signature on the check with samples of Rice's signings left at the bank for that purpose. While the writing on the check seemed genuine, and while the body of this instrument was made out in the familiar chirography of the valet, Jones, who customarily drew Rice's checks, the banker was still not reassured and insisted on consulting Rice.

Accordingly, a clerk telephoned to the apartment and was answered by Jones, who said the check was good and should be cashed. He was, perhaps, a little too emphatic or a trifle nervous. At any rate, the bank was still not certain and insisted on having a confirmation from Rice in person.

But William Marsh Rice was dead, and his body lay in the bedroom of the apartment, where embalmers had filled it with their preserving fluids.

The valet was forced to put the bank off with excuses. He had no more than hung up when he called back and got into touch with Patrick. The lawyer advised Jones to say to the bank that Rice was dead. This Jones did. Now the bankers, certain that all was not well, refused to cash the check at all and maintained that the money could only be paid to the administrator. Patrick rushed to the bank, explained that the estate was in his hands by virtue of a will and a general assignment made by the aged millionaire before his death, and insisted on having the cash. But the bank was not to be moved.

Patrick then dashed off to another bank, where a check to him from Rice for one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars was certified. He sped to Rice's safe-deposit vault, where two million five hundred thousand dollars in securities were kept, and presented an order from Rice commanding the bank to deliver the contents of the boxes to Patrick. This the bankers refused to do. Patrick was balked. In a few hours, the suspicion of forgery and murder had been raised against him, and the machinery of the law was in motion to grind the truth out of this extraordinary case.

After so many years it is unnecessary to review the developments of the case in their chronological order. It is enough to take, for a starting point, the statement of the valet, Jones, on whose testimony the prosecution of Patrick was founded.

To understand fully the dubiety which has always existed, the character of Jones needs to be understood. He was a weak, subnormal, and perhaps defective man of the servile and skulking kind. He had neither initiative nor firmness. And there were many who

believed him to be a pathological liar and self-accuser, by no means a rare type. Again, the man thrice changed the statement he made involving Patrick. Perhaps he told the truth in the end, but his vacillation only deepened doubt.

There are no more engrossing stories of murder conspiracy than that which Jones told the district attorney. In 1896, he said, his aged master had made a will, leaving the bulk of his great estate to a charitable and educative institution founded by Rice and named for him. Relatives were cut off with small bequests. Some time after the will had been made, a firm of New York lawyers undertook a legal fight against Rice involving money bequeathed by his decedent wife. The question involved was whether this woman had had a right to dispose of the property. Rice denied it, and those against him affirmed. One of the minor attorneys arrayed against Rice was Albert T. Patrick. The old millionaire had heard of Patrick but despised him, refused to meet him, and considered him an enemy.

It was through this suit that Patrick first came in contact with the millionaire. He was sent out by his superiors to discover whether he could find or make evidence to show that Rice was a resident of Texas, in which case his wife would have had the power to will the money involved. Patrick, trying to run down such testimony, visited the Rice apartment under an assumed name and attempted to corrupt Jones. He found the valet easily compliant and at the same time got an idea of the Rice ménage.

The millionaire, who was then eighty years old, lived in a commodious apartment with Jones, who acted as nurse, valet, secretary, and confidential man. A negress came mornings and left evenings. She did the cooking. Visitors came only at long intervals and stayed briefly. So the multimillionaire was practically a recluse, hermited in the heart of a great city. He was, however, far from being either incompetent or peculiar. His health was unusually good and his mind active and strong. He took care of his own business affairs and managed his large affairs carefully and constructively.

Patrick looked at this isolated octogenarian, realized his remoteness from family and friends, and read his opportunity out of the circumstances of Rice's life. So Jones implied in his confession. Patrick understood that this very rich old man could not live long, that the 1896 will left the bulk of about seven million dollars to the charity in Texas, and that relatives were cut off with very little.

Calculating shrewdly enough, Patrick saw that, if a new will were made, in which the relatives were more liberally treated and the charity practically cut off, their self-interest would compel them to his cause, even though Patrick were left the sums devised to that institution, and though the sympathy of Rice's natural heirs might be against him. Again, being a trained lawyer, he understood that this earlier will of 1896 must be left in existence and not destroyed, since, if there were no earlier will which dispossessed them, the relatives of Rice would fight the new will, which Patrick intended drawing, in order that Rice might be declared to have died intestate—in which event, all his wealth would fall to his natural heirs.

Accordingly, Patrick set out to create a forged will of William Marsh Rice. To this end, he got Jones to procure a number of genuine signatures and a number of letters in Rice's handwriting, so that Patrick might use them for his imitations and traceries. Patrick then wrote one will and later another. As he proceeded with his plot, his mind kept inventing new and more complete details. In the end, he created and signed

with Rice's name the following documents:

A will, dated 1900, in which the charitable house in Texas was left a comparatively small sum, Rice's relatives were given two or three times as much as under the 1896 will, and Patrick was made residuary legatee and administrator. The bulk of everything fell to him.

A general assignment of all Rice's property.

An order on the safe-deposit company, commanding it to turn over to Patrick the securities Rice kept there.

Checks for twenty-five thousand dollars, one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars, sixty-five thousand dollars, and another for twenty-five thousand dollars, almost enough to draw out Rice's complete bank balances. These forged checks were not written till the eleventh hour.

A letter instructing Patrick to have Rice's body immediately cremated without embalming. This was also fraudulently signed by Rice, and apparently it, too, was got up at the last moment.

In the beginning, according to Jones' confession, Patrick did not seem to contemplate the murder of Rice. He merely forged the will, the assignment, and the order on the safe-deposit company, in order to possess himself of the Rice wealth. But, early in September, 1900, when Patrick had all his forged groundwork laid and was waiting for Rice to sink into the inevitable sleep, a factory in Texas burned down, and the directors appealed to Rice, as the chief stockholder, to furnish the money for rebuilding. The aged millionaire consented and wired that he would forward the money in installments to a total of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, almost enough to wipe out the cash in bank.

Patrick saw great danger to his schemes in this, for he understood that he would need money immediately after Rice's death to fight his case in the courts in the event of a contest by Rice's relatives and other beneficiaries. In other words, he had in mind the plan to forge checks and draw out Rice's funds, so that he might employ them in defending the fraudulent will he had drawn in his own favor. But, if Rice were to send his cash to Texas, there would be nothing to draw, and the conspirators would be left high and dry, with a forged will and no money for its defense.

This fire in distant Texas, according to Jones, was the event that sealed Rice's fate. Patrick insisted that the old man must die at once, and, after he and Jones had repeatedly dosed the weakened octogenarian with mercury pills, they decided on a rasher and more direct attack. Patrick instructed Jones in the manner of using chloroform and told the valet to put a saturated sponge over the old man's face as he lay sleeping.

That night the wraith of murder stalked through the Rice apartment. Rice, who had been ailing for some days and needed the attention of a physician, had gone to bed early, apparently somewhat improved and certainly in no danger of dying from his maladies, which had been partly induced by the mercury pills. As soon as it was dark, Jones got out two bottles of chloroform, wet a large sponge in their lethal content, dropped this softest of all the instruments of murder into a cone made of a folded towel, crept catlike into the old man's room, and crushed this compress of death, upon the sleeper's face.

For a few minutes, he stood there watching, fascinated, clutched by terror and guilt, unable to move away. Then he crept out into his own room and sat in the shuddering darkness with the weight of his crime oppressing him. Time was interminable and the darkness full of fantastic horrors, but Jones neither touched the lights nor stirred.

Half delirious with fear and horror, he seemed to hear the buzzing of the doorbell and shrank farther into the corner of his chamber. Later, he could not be quite certain the bell had rung, till two old ladies confirmed that they had visited the apartment at the hour and been unable to gain admittance.

Finally, the craven valet slunk back into his master's room and found him dead. He removed the towel and sponge, burned them in the kitchen range, opened the doors and windows to let the odor of the chloroform be dissipated, and telephoned to Patrick that Rice was dead.

Then it was that the checks were forged, which were intended to draw Rice's balance from the banks, and the cremation letter brought out for use.

This is the gist of the confession of Jones which led to the indictment and trial of Patrick and to his eventual conviction and sentence to death.

Patrick visited the Rice apartment on the following day, sent off rather peculiar telegrams to relatives of the dead man, and got in touch with the doctor who had attended Rice in his last illness. This good man thought it peculiar that Rice died so suddenly, but he understood that a man of eighty-four could not be expected to live much longer or recover normally from disease, so he certified the millionaire's death, all unsuspecting, and gave a burial permit.

Now Patrick got in touch with a crematory but found that Rice's body could not be burned for twenty-four hours, since the ovens were cold and needed that length of time to be heated. Foiled here, the slayer turned to the undertakers and had the body embalmed. Then relatives of the decedent arrived and crowded Patrick out of control. He had got only twenty-five thousand dollars of Rice's money from the banks, had failed to get the bonds, and in rapid succession saw his general assignment and will questioned, his checks repudiated, and himself finally accused of murder and locked into the Tombs with Jones.

To this point, we have seen only the hostile interpretation of Patrick's conduct, and of the events centering about Rice's death. We have shown the prosecutor's case. Patrick is yet to be heard, and it is from the side of the defendant, in this great case, that all the doubt and mystery were supplied. In order to understand the dubiety more fully, it is necessary to remember that Patrick might have forged a new will of Rice's, might have prepared the fraudulent general assignment, and caused the forging of the checks, without ever having intended the murder of Rice or participated therein. Evidence of forgery and demonstration of the purpose to loot the Rice estate are by no means proof of murder, though they may be suggestive in the extreme. Death may have come to Rice naturally, or Jones may have done the foul deed alone, from motives which have never been disclosed.

Of these doubts and all the counter-possibilities Patrick based his defense, without, however, admitting the forgeries. He fought every step of the way, confessing nothing, denying that he had ever plotted against Rice, and bringing forward a number of letters from the millionaire to prove that there had been a decided intimacy between him and the dead man, which fact might explain the change in the Rice will in Patrick's favor. The district attorney naturally contended that these letters, too, were forged, and that, instead of helping Patrick, they only strengthened the evidence of a plot. Patrick had been shrewd enough to foresee that an explanation of Rice's kindly feeling for him would have to be forthcoming, and he provided it in these letters. This view of the matter was confirmed by Jones in a further confession.

But the State's case was not yet com-

plete. Patrick, it will be remembered, had first started to cremate the body of Rice, but, being balked by cool ovens, he had turned about and caused the body to be embalmed. An autopsy was accordingly held, and the public physicians found that there was no evidence in the viscera of poisons such as might have caused death, but a presence of some mercury, evidently left from the pills Rice had been given. On examining the lungs, however, the physicians discovered that they were considerably congested. There was, even among the doctors called by the prosecution, some doubt as to the extent and degree of the congestion, but all were certain it had been there, and just as positive that it must have been caused by the introduction of some irritating gas into the lungs before death. On this point the prosecutor's physicians were emphatic. A small stoppage found in the lungs was said to have been insufficient to cause widespread congestion. Neither, in the opinion of these experts, could the embalming fluids have brought about the result. Their only effect could have been to bleach the lung tissues to some extent. Ergo, Rice had been killed by inhaling poison gas, and Jones was borne out in this detail.

Patrick went to work to upset this line of testimony. His first assault was upon the veracity and character of Valet Jones. Here he had tangible stuff to work on. Jones had made three different and distinct confessions, the last of which he augmented in his testimony. In other words he was, by his own statements, a liar. He had also shown great weakness and vacillation and a distinct subnormality. There could be no doubt that he was far from a reliable witness, and, since four fifths of the case against the lawyer rested on the statements of this man, this was a most important matter. Patrick was able to throw about the whole personality and past of Jones an air of doubt, discredence, and mystery, which persists. The fact that Jones was let off for his aid in convicting Patrick, and that he soon vanished from sight and discovery, have not failed to enlarge this questioning.

The chief confirmation of Jones' story lay, of course, in what the autopsy had disclosed. To condense all this technical and medical squabble into its simplest terms, the problem turned on the question of whether the congestion in Rice's lungs had been caused by a corrosive gas, administered before death, or by the embalming fluid. Patrick maintained and his experts testified that the liquids used by the embalmers had irritated and congested the lung fiber after the old man's death, and that the much mooted congestion was no evidence against him. And there was a fairly even division of medical opinion in this matter.

Accordingly, Patrick's lawyers claimed, the case against their client depended upon two dubious pieces of evidence, the confession of a man who had lied repeatedly and was not mentally trustworthy; and, again, on corroboration of this man's story by a medical thesis which was false or by no means conclusive.

The jury found against Patrick, probably because his twelve peers believed that a man who could plot to obtain the Rice estate by forgery was also quite capable of committing murder to the same end. The fact that Patrick refused to take the stand in his own defense also weighed against him.

So the lawyer was condemned to death and locked into the waiting cells at Sing Sing, where the little green door so often swung open and ushered men into the white presence of shocking death.

Here began one of the most remarkable fights for life any man ever made. Locked in his steel cage, cut off from life outside except by the most tenuous approaches, quaking in the chalky terror

of the place, and weighed with the load of a conviction and sentence, Patrick summoned to his aid what he knew of the law and, what was more to the point, an apparently indomitable will and insuperable courage. He filed a brief with the court of appeals that is still without match for fine reasoning. He won his reprieve more than once.

The doubt which had lingered in the public mind began to mount to a spontaneous admiration for this brave fighter. People did not so much consider him innocent at first. He did not command belief, but there swung to him that mob love of courageousness and of power under adversity that has made kings and heroes out of criminals far too often in the long record of human history. Bertrand du Guesclin, a national hero of France, was a brigand and freebooter, but he was also a soldier *sans peur et sans reproche,* as his compatriots loved to say, without much regard for what may be reproached. The lack of fear in him was what commanded peoples' reverence and devotion. Whatever else he was, he remained a brave man. Homage was due him.

Patrick continued his fight, gradually winning adherents. At last he began to sway belief in his own direction. Many began to see or believe they saw that the case against him had been weak. the governor, overcome by the man's titanic exertions and the popular swing of favor, commuted Patrick's sentence to life imprisonment, and the lawyer was rescued from the death house after he had helped to save a fellow condemned man from the chair.

Soon after, an extraneous and interesting figure entered the lists in Patrick's behalf. Out at Kirksville, Missouri, one thousand five hundred miles from the city of Patrick's supposed crime and the great jail where he lay entombed, is a medical school teaching that gradually encroaching theory of medicine called the osteopathic method. The American School of Osteopathy is its name. Its tenets are, roughly, that a great deal of human disease and disorder rests upon undiscovered bony dislocations, especially in the spine. One of its chief medical heads was Doctor William Smith, a graduate of Edinborough and intimate of some of the foremost British surgeons and medical teachers. Doctor Smith saw the testimony in the Patrick case long after the defendant had been sent to the death house. He was, as he told the writer on one occasion, shocked to find that any American physician had ever testified that the congestion of the lungs could not have been caused by embalming fluids. As a matter of fact, said Doctor Smith, this was one of the commonest results from the use of these preservative liquids. Any student who had worked at the dissection of cadavers ought to know it beyond the peradventure of a doubt. It was common classroom knowledge.

Horrified that a man might be put to death on testimony corroborated in this way, according to Doctor Smith, he went feverishly to work gathering new opinions from totally disinterested scientists of high reputation. Without knowing anything about the Patrick case externally, Doctor Smith wrote to the foremost British and European anatomists, surgeons, and medical teachers, in each case asking whether there could be any doubt as to the congestive quality of embalming fluid in the lungs after death. He accumulated a large number of negative replies. There could be no doubt at all that embalming fluid not only might but commonly did cause the precise effects noted in Rice's body.

Thus buttressed by foreign expert opinion, Doctor Smith went to work on a number of embalmed bodies and took very elaborate and accurate Roentgen photographs of the lungs after embalming. In all cases there was apparent congestion. To match with these pho-

tographs, the osteopathic professor took many others of lungs where no embalming had been practiced. They were clear and uncongested.

This new evidence was accordingly submitted to Governor Dix, after Patrick had already been commuted. It must have had a powerful effect upon the mind of the executive, for it struck the doubters with wonderment and filled those who had formerly been on the fence in the Patrick case with a strong suspicion that the law had made one of its not infrequent blunders. This writer, a totally impartial witness, to whom the Patrick case had then been little but a distant rumor, saw the photographs and read the testimonials of the foreign experts when asked for an opinion, before they were sent on to Governor Dix. He could not avoid concluding that the testimony in corroboration of Jones' confession had been erroneous.

On the strength of this new testimony and a growing popular sympathy for Patrick, evidenced by a petition for his release, containing hundreds of thousands of signatures, the governor issued Patrick a pardon. The famous prisoner was at length set free and drifted West, where he was last heard from in Oklahoma.

So this great mystery remains. The story of Valet Jones is still unshaken save by the original doubts that enveiled it. He remains to-day a strange and perhaps an incredible witness, from whose lips came the details of a Borgian conspiracy of murder and loot. Corroboration, which the law demands from a man who confesses that he was an accessory to a crime or a participant, has been reduced to a gossamer. The work of Doctor Smith showed, to all who are open-minded, that there could have been no post-mortem evidence of chloroform. Perhaps it had been used, but the embalming must have negatived all appearance of it, and there was no man who could have attested its presence or employment. The Patrick case, therefore, rests upon the story of a man who confessed that he himself had done the actual murder.

And all the mystery and wonder are fresh as on the first day. The doubts that cling are many: Did Patrick forge the will and the other papers, as Jones said? Most of those familiar with the case still believe he did.

Did Patrick kill the old millionaire by Jones' hand with the famous two vials of chloroform, and did the embalming fluid then effectively hide the traces of the crime? Or did William Marsh Rice die naturally, at the consummation of his eighty-fourth year, as all men die when the organism which is man has run out its functions to the full?

Finally, was there a murder conceived in some other brain than Patrick's? Had the valet, Jones, some dark and perhaps mad grievance against his master, that led him to the deed of death?

Or, last of all, was there some other conspirator who conceived the plan of using Jones for the actual slaying and, at the same time, leading the greedy Patrick into making evidence against himself in the false will and other forgeries? Was it possible that, through Jones, Patrick had been induced to plot the looting of the Rice estate so that another avenger might kill Rice at his leisure and still feel sure that the papers were in existence to veer the vane of suspicion toward Patrick and away from the true killer?

Fanciful, you say? But why, if a man could plot such a machination of murder as Patrick is said to have conceived, could not some other imagination have made the next step and some other hand guided the tangled strands of the conspiring? Rice was a man who had amassed millions, and men do not accomplish this without making bitter

enemies. Rice had inflamed those who were to benefit by the will of his wife by contesting and overthrowing her right to devise the property. Rice had cut off his family with small bequests, and he had so alienated all his line that he lived apart like a beggar, in the care of those who were of no tie with him. Anywhere along the distant and tortuous stream of his life he may have created this deadly enemy of our speculation, who delved and waited till he might strike in safety. Worse terrors and spites are in the human heart. It may not be all rumor and fancy.

But no such protagonist of the vengeance lust has been dragged from his own heart's darkness, and this famous case must remain one of the mysteries which lie in the region of possible doubt.

DOPE SENT IN FISH CASKS

IN a raid made a short time ago at Pier 16, foot of Joralemon Street, Brooklyn, New York, Federal authorities seized narcotic drugs valued at about $100,000. The drugs were discovered when a truck that carried freight to and from the pier bumped into a group of twelve casks supposed to contain fish. One of the casks sprang open, and an official from the Customs House who was standing near by noticed a tin box two feet long and three inches deep in the middle of the open container. The discovery was reported to William Sanders, Deputy Surveyor of the Port, who ordered all the cases to be opened. A tin box, similar to the one in the first cask, was found in each of the others. Officials said later that the casks contained drugs of different kinds. Pending the thorough investigation which it was announced would be made, it was learned that the cargo of fish was brought to New York by the French liner *Fenchurch*, operated by J. W. Elwell & Company, agents of the Fabre Line. The vessel docked at Pier 16 from Malaga, Spain.

JAIL ESCAPE FOILED BY FAT CONVICT

IF the twelve prisoners in the Amarillo Jail in Texas, who a short time ago planned to make their escape, had not taken pity on "Fatty" Holmes, they might possibly be free men to-day. But they did take pity on Fatty, and as a result their attempt to escape was foiled. The convicts had succeeded in cutting a hole through the stone wall of the jail, and the night when they would make their exit to freedom had been decided upon. When the time came, the convicts decided they had been uncharitable in excluding Fatty Holmes, the only other prisoner in the jail, and offered to let him in on the plan. Accordingly, when four of the men had crawled through the hole, Fatty was told to take his turn next. Fatty tried to get through, but got caught in the hole so that he could neither push himself forward nor pull himself back into the jail. The efforts of the four men outside and the other eight inside were equally unsuccessful in budging Fatty, and there he remained until the following morning when the jailer made his rounds. Fatty was pried out of his uncomfortable position, almost frozen, and the four men who had managed to make their escape were soon rounded up from the surrounding country. The prisoners are all agreed now what they should have done was to let Fatty make his try last.

Rat Poison

by Elmer J. Williams

THE judge paused, an interminably long pause. His young face was very white. Only the ticking of the courtroom clock sounded. Chudski, the fat deputy, sat in a wide chair, overflowing it, and his breathing could be heard.

Now the judge spoke again: "There to be executed, on the morning of January twenty-eighth, by the passage through your body of a current of electricity—of sufficient voltage to cause death."

It was all over. The crowd stirred. "Snick" Marco, his small face very gray, put out his wrists to Chudski for the handcuffs. The judge hurried away and the door quickly closed behind him. Chudski took Marco out through the crowd, and men followed them, talking. They were glad that Marco got what was coming to him. He was a rat.

Usually in jail men meet each other sympathetically, regardless of how widely different their crimes may be. In the world they may not cross lines socially, but in jail there are no class distinctions.

But not so with Snick Marco. He was something they did not like. When they took him out, day after day during the trial, no one spoke to him from the cells. When hoarse voices were raised in song, from cage to cage, his was never heard, though it is a tradition that all must join, fear-ridden or soul-tortured though they may be. Somehow they hated Marco down there in the end cell.

Chudski waddled down the corridor with the doomed prisoner at his side. "Hypo" Doyle put his bloodless face between the bars and chattered at the deputy.

"Hey, you, there's rats around here! I hear 'em all night. Why don't you kill the rats?"

Chudski only grunted. That is all he ever did.

"Rats—I hear 'em all night."

The deputy turned his broad face to the addict. "I guess you want a sniff, huh? Dope, huh?" Then he opened Marco's cell, and it clanged on the prisoner.

Doyle shrieked after the deputy: "Hey, why don't you kill 'em?"

Marco was crouched on his hard cot, back in the corner. His little ears heard every sound. His soul was flooded with fright. He would have used a knife on Doyle, had it been possible.

If they should come up, looking for the rats that the addict complained of, they might discover what Marco had under the coarse blankets of his cot—a little steel rod. Night after night he had worked to get it loose from the springs of the bunk, and night after night, before and during the trial, he had ground it down on the stone floor. Doyle, who never slept, had heard him. Doyle thought it was rats.

Furtively Marco drew out the rod, and it gleamed in the darkness. It was thin and came to a long, tapering point, almost a needle point. Marco's little eyes danced in the darkness wickedly. His teeth chattered with a sudden chill when he thought of possible discovery.

Presently Chudski came up with a large platter, a special dish for Marco.

"You get a good meal to-night," he grunted. The deputy could see nothing in the darkness of the cell except a huddled gray shape and the tiny lights of beady eyes. The platter was too big to pass through the slot in the cell door,

so he fished for his keys, first placing the dish carefully upon the floor. Then he released the lock.

"Here——" Chudski was passing the platter through the door, but his voice died abruptly with an odd sound. His eyes opened wide, as the heavy body descended slowly to the knees. He said nothing more, but fell forward into the cell, and it seemed that he tried hard to lift his head. The thin, icy steel had passed through his ribs and touched his heart. Chudski was dead.

Marco crawled over the body. He had the revolver and the keys. The big key—that was for the bull-pen gate downstairs. He had watched Chudski use it more than once. As he stole down the long corridor he was but a gray shadow, a part of similar shadows. He descended the winding iron stairway and held the gun in his hand, though he was afraid of it. He reached the big steel gate. The key turned easily, and the barred door swung on soundless hinges. Then he was swept with a new terror.

Suddenly he realized that he did not have the courage to make a break for it into the lobby, where waited Coughlin, the turnkey—Coughlin with the hard scar across his face. That man was like a terrier. Marco was afraid of him. Coughlin would shoot quickly and straight. He dared not face him.

Putting the gun in his coat pocket he began to crawl along the corridor, away from the jail lobby, where was the door to freedom. Soon he knew that Coughlin would become uneasy about Chudski and go to seek him; but if he stayed here the turnkey would see Marco and shoot him like a rat.

There was a door at the end of the corridor. He crept to it and found it open. Marco went down the steps into the jail basement, where he groped along a wall. He would not find the courage to go back and face the man in the lobby, with his cool, alert eyes.

If Marco could find a place to hide down in the basement, they might not look for him here. They would think he got out some other way. If he hid away for a few days, later there might come a chance. He crept farther, farther along a wall. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness. He could make out the coal bins and the dark shapes of the furnaces. Everything frightened him to the point of panic. Overhead were pipes, water pipes and steam pipes, some like long, pallid fingers, pointing through the darkness. He trembled, huddled against the wall, his pulse clamoring in his ears. He had never dreamed how much he feared Coughlin and a gun.

Something ran across his feet, something that he could feel was alive. His trembling, clammy fingers sought his face. His skin was cold, damp, and sticky to his own touch. He dropped again to his knees, quaking. He had the horrible sensation that some one was watching him, some invisible presence that would wait until he got so far and then seize him. He could almost hear the mocking laugh.

Once there was a weak impulse, a sudden sweep of courage, to go back and shoot at Coughlin. But the thought was smothered with a new fear. Marco had never used a gun in his life. He did not kill that way. Coughlin would get him.

Marco tried to find the basement windows, but at last, when he came to one, the discovery only filled him with a sickening disappointment. Through the glass he could see the heavy bars, and beyond them the jail yard, surrounded by its pickets of iron.

Quickly he must find a hiding place in the basement. There was a chance that they would never dream he was there. In one black corner he discovered a confusion of boxes and crates, piled high. He searched about them silently. He found a place where his

thin body would go between the boxes and the wall. He burrowed into the pile as far as he could go, trembling every moment lest he should disturb the boxes and bring them tumbling down. At last he crawled into one that lay on its side, far in the pile, its open top toward the wall. It was very dark, and the quiet was reassuring.

II.

Hunger, naked, gaunt, and painful, came to Snick Marco. He knew that he was starving, that he would die like a rat, there in the box. He did not know how long it had been since he had crept in there. His mind, blurred by terrors and fearful dreams, had ceased to function, except upon the desperate, appalling fear of the trap that he was in. Sometimes he tried to determine how long he had been in there, but there was no way. It could not have been months; he would have died. He could feel the bones under the dry skin of his face. A few times he had heard footsteps and faint voices, and once it had been women. He guessed them to be the matron and the sheriff's wife. Of course, they were not seeking him.

His hunger was not a craving. It became a pain which gave him not a moment's respite, no sleep. Sometimes he could not restrain a hollow little cough, though he put his hands across his mouth to muffle the sound. Marco decided to go out. Surely, he thought, there must be something to eat in the basement. It was possible that they kept food supplies, something, down there. He started to creep from his hole.

There was more light than when he had come in—that night ages ago. He guessed from the faint light seen on a window that it was dusk, or maybe dawn. His ears caught no sound. Marco dragged himself along the floor. Fifteen feet from him there were more neatly piled boxes. He reached them, and his fingers explored all around. He knew that they might contain food, but they had never been opened. He could not do it. One hand crawled along, feeling hopelessly. He touched something.

Marco pulled it down and placed it on the floor before his eyes. He feared that his mind had fooled him. It was bread! Almost an entire loaf. The thought of it gave him strength. He got to his feet, but the floor seemed to sag with him. He felt as though he were slipping down, down.

Bracing himself against the wall, he went back to his hole, where he was safe. Now he began to eat. At first he gnawed in a ravenous fury. Then after a few mouthfuls he became even more eager for the food and clawed into the soft middle of the loaf and stuffed handfuls between his dry lips. He ate it all. It was stale and moldy, but it was good. Oh, it was good! If he only had some water.

Now he was choking. He put his fingers in his mouth and touched his parched tongue. A terrible something struck him on the back. He shrieked.

"Water! Water!"

Marco crawled out of his hole. The terrible, piercing shrieks were louder. He fell face downward upon the hard concrete of the floor. Weakly he tried to make sounds with his lips. His body quivered with sudden convulsions. He rolled over, and his thin lips curled upward rigidly, showing the two rows of small teeth. The staring eyes became white blanks. A green froth showed on his chin. Marco had died.

Coughlin shuddered when he looked at the face.

"I was above," he jabbered to the others, "and I heard him scream. What do you think of that? Down here! I know what got him! That bread! Rat poison!"

Headquarters Chat

IT was in last week's issue, remember, that a Western fellow got after us hot and heavy because we didn't tell about some of the wicked criminals they have had out West, protested that we had neglected their celebrities in crime.

And now, by heck, if the women aren't getting after us. Here's Mrs. R. M. Williams, of Washington, D. C., right from the very seat of government. Her letter follows:

"DEAR EDITOR: There cannot exist a more 'constant and interested reader for years' than myself, of the ever greatly welcome DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. I have no grouch. I have never tried to write any story or letter for you, nor sent you anything at all.

"But now there is a question I do want to ask you very much indeed. Why are not more of the stories about girls or women? And written by girls or women? It is so very rare and extremely seldom as to be almost never that your detective or mystery stories are written by a woman about a woman.

"I have not the faintest idea whether you do not receive them or whether you refuse them. I and many others ask why.

"The Gray Phantom, The Picaroon, Mr. Clackworthy, Simon Trapp, Doctor Bentiron, Thubway Tham, et cetera, are all about the adventures and experiences of men and always written by men. 'Stolen Clothes' did have a woman in the story, but it was written by a man.

"No stories about women or written by women, but the magazine can be bought and read by women. The women readers whom I represent would appreciate your answer to our question —why?"

Now, Mrs. Williams, while we have to admit that we have more or less neglected evildoers in the State of California and other places in the general direction of the setting sun, we feel we have had some powerful wicked women in our stories. Also, we have had some articles about women criminals which made us fear that the entire "fragile" sex would rise against us and refused to read another copy of the magazine. Further, women, loving mystery, intrigue, and adventure fully as much as, if not more than, men do, number themselves among our very best writers of fiction on this subject.

Now for the documentary evidence. Some of our feminine authors are: Carolyn Wells, Isabel Ostrander Lamb, Adele Luehrmann, Natalie Sumner Lincoln, Eva Pittaro, Maude Pettus, Florence M. Pettee, Dahlia Graham, Mary Louise Buzzell, Zoë Beckley, Madeleine Bartlett, Elizabeth York Miller, and Katherine M. Roof.

So numerous are the ladies, young and old, who have transgressed in fact and in fiction in the pages of our magazine, that space prohibits our listing them. If we gave you just a few, think of all the wicked women that we would have laying for us because we had not mentioned *their* names.

What Handwriting Reveals

If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send Louise Rice, in care of this magazine, specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned, and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. She will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

All communications will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in the department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.

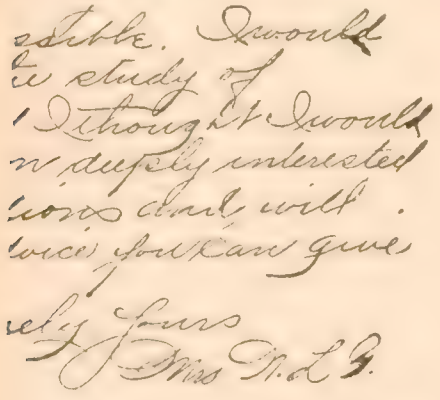
Every care will be taken to return specimens of handwriting, but it is to be understood that Miss Rice cannot be responsible for them.

EDWARD F. R. RAWLINS.—I hate to say it, but I will have to agree that you are just one of the men who are still without true character development, though you are far beyond the age when it is to be expected. This does not say that you may not become all that you ever wanted to be, but it does say that the time for it is ever shorter, and that your power to break away from your weaknesses is, to say the least, no stronger. Now mind you, it is quite impossible for me to tell you what you ought to go into beside the business which has engaged your attention for so many years. Looking carefully at your handwriting, I can see no reason why, in a small town, you should not run such a business, have your home, be an important member of the community, and be entirely satisfied. I suspect that you just fritter away your powers in these "moods" that you speak of. Whenever I hear that word, I feel like taking a good-sized hammer and going out on the highways to swat vigorously anybody who talks to me about moods! They are all just nonsense, and the person who allows them to interfere with honest-to-goodness life ought to have some remedy like the old-fashioned ducking stool. There, I guess that throws a whole lot of light on how I regard your problem, Edward.

MARGUERITE TOWNLEY.—Both your letter and your handwriting interested me very much. You feel this sadness, this longing to "get away," because you are strongly individualized, and because your soul and mind are reaching out toward wider horizons than even "a wonderful mother, a little sister, and a good position" can mean. It is not often I tell a young person I am perfectly sure they are destined to do something unusual in the world, but this is one of the times I am going to do that. I am not really sure just what you will do ultimately. For the present, stop wasting your time, as you so truly call it, on social affairs. Take as many nights a week as you dare and keep your health, and go to a night school where you can take up your education just where you laid it down. You ought to have two years of this. Save your money and see, then, if you can't have at least two summers at some college specializing in courses for literary and artistically inclined students. No, even at that, I am not sure that

you will be a writer, but I am sure that you will find your professional career in that way. Let me hear from you from time to time. It's not often I am so sure of a youngster of your age, and I would like to hear how you come out.

Mrs. N. L. G.—In your leaning toward commercial art you have a true pointer to success. I know that this will cheer you, and I hope that it will lead you into throwing all your time, money, and ambition into that line. On the other hand, I have to say that I am sure that you will find very definite limits to your possibilities.



I would expect you to be a wonderful letterer, and to do "layouts" and designs well; you will understand that, as you have already been interested—but I know that you will never do well at figures or at decorative art. If you estimate this truly, and so not waste time or effort, you will be far more likely than the majority of persons to win success in this difficult but lucrative following.

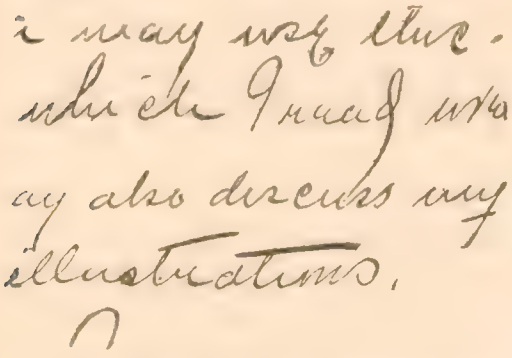
F. J. K. Streator.—No, no difference in the two styles of writing as to indication of character. However, persons who can readily turn from one style of writing to another have the capacity for showing a different temperament to the world at need, as those who must stick to the one style cannot. Thus, your upright "hand" shows that severe personality which you can assume in business, and that flowing "hand" shows that you are at heart affectionate and far more demonstrative than any one who met you in the "upright" mood would suspect. You ought to be interested in the law. Not that you would necessarily be a good lawyer; there are all sorts of side issues to the law, you know. You would make a good law clerk, and that is a commodity of which there is not half enough.

Mrs. May E. W.—You are right. This department is always "overwhelmed," and that is the reason I have to keep you folks waiting a great deal longer than I would like to. Sorry, but I think you are making a mistake in thinking that you would like to be a writer. On the other hand, your enjoyment of what may be called the literary atmosphere is not to be disputed. I should estimate you as capable of being a fine newspaper worker, as possibly a successful writer of "publicity" and advertising—and also as a good critic of the literary output of others. Here, surely, is a field which is well worth while, and which is remunerative and does not lack in interest. You are a moderately affectionate person, but I am sure that you would never be contented with domestic life alone. Intercourse with people, meeting new people, contact with life in the close and yet impersonal way that comes to the public servant—all this is what you need, and what you must have if you are to be either happy or useful.

Lillian.—The specimen which you inclose is expressive of the bad temper and coarseness that girls of your refinement seem so inevitably attracted to; I am sure that it is the writing of a young man, and that he is as far beneath you as the dirt which you tread under your feet. Be warned, Lillian. This is the curse of womanhood, that we do not demand enough of goodness from the men that we allow to approach us either

as friends or life mates. Your handwriting shows me the ideal type of nature, refined and sensitive, affectionate and pure, unassertive, unselfish, something of a dreamer. Be warned as to yourself, also, my dear. Keep that fineness of you for those who have proven that they are worthy of it, and toward the world in general try to turn a more resolute and positive face. Thus will you conserve your personal happiness, keep your peace of mind, and be able to cope with an existence which is rugged and wearing.

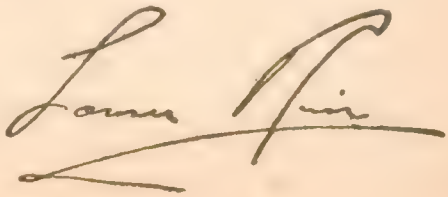
James J. B., Montana.—You certainly have both a will and a temper, James. I am using your writing as an illustration to show what a strong and aggressive "t" bar is like.



Your writing, however, does not bear out what your "t" bar says, so that I am sure that after you have shouted your determination to the world and have lost your temper over it as well, you are just as likely as anything to give it up through inability to stick to your plan. You need, in a word, more quiet self-control, and less aggressive proclamation of will power. I should say that you had a very loving nature, but that you would find it hard to make a woman think so, since you have not that quiet strength and unselfish fervor which are the only qualities which women really care for, long. You ought to do work that requires ingenuity and resourcefulness.

Irene.—A nice little girl you are, Irene, so far as your wishes and your impulses are concerned. I know that you like your girl friends, and that you are fond of your parents, and that you wish to be good. This is considerable, my dear, although it may not seem to be. On the other hand, you have not much ambition and are apt to be lazy—eh, Irene? You are too fond of just spending time in a pleasant, do-less manner.

Methodist.—I really don't know what to say to you, my dear sir. If you think that what I do is "all bunk," why write me? Why waste a good sheet of paper on me? Above all, why end up by saying that, if I choose to, I can say what I think of you? For a person who takes such a high and mighty attitude toward the world—the sinful, very sinful, world!—it strikes me that you are acting in a very childish manner. If you really want me to tell you what I think of you, I shall. I think that you are one of the most immature persons for your age I have ever met, in the flesh or by the pen; I think that you are really rather sensual, and that that is the reason you are a prude; I think that, hidden under your narrow-mindedness and your immaturity, there is a fund of good sense and practical ability which may develop and find expression if you get away from persons who applaud your set and smug airs, and if you fall among those who will metaphorically kick you into being human and, what's more, acknowledging it. There—and I'll bet my newest hat that that was not the sort of thing you expected from me at all, at all!



Any one interested in any phase of finger printing will receive advice from Mr. Call and his associates, upon a statement of their needs. Experts, in doubt as to the details of a case on which they are engaged, will be given prompt and careful attention.

All communications requiring a reply must be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope. Mr. Call particularly invites letters and inquiries which may be published in this department.

Courtroom Appearances

MANY finger-print experts who are thoroughly familiar with their subjects nevertheless find that it is almost impossible for them to make a convincing appearance in court, due to the fact that they find themselves nervous at such a moment. One F. P. E. who is quite well known, has been writing me for several months about this, and, as he says that my suggestions have helped him, it occurred to me that they might prove useful to some others.

Nervousness of this sort, in which the victim blushes or stammers or has difficulty with his voice or finds that he is constrained and unnatural in his attitudes, can be overcome, provided that a determined effort is made, and that no trouble is thought too great for the effecting of the purpose.

In the first place, then, let us consider what really makes this diffidence. It is not doubt of the ability to speak on the subject? No! The photographs are all ready, all studied out, the correct number for judge and jury to have, while you point out the pattern with your enlarged photograph; you know exactly what you want to say, and you have the accorded position of an expert, so that the attitude toward you in the courtroom is that of respect? Yes, of course. Very well then, it is not you, the expert, who should be nervous. But you are? Well, the reason lies wholly in your own mind, and I will endeavor to show you what it is and how to get rid of it.

The whole trouble is that you are projecting your mind outside of yourself, outside of your legitimate place

there in the courtroom; you are putting yourself mentally in the place of all those who will look at you; you are criticizing yourself, looking on yourself with unfriendly eyes. It is as if you had seated yourself in the minds of all the persons who are looking at you, and as if all those minds were unfriendly. In a word, this state of nervousness is an odd compound of the man who is uncertain of himself and the man who is vain of himself; it is a sort of back-handed vanity, as it were. The scientists who deal with these abnormalities of the human mind have long names for all this, but there it is in plain words that any man can read and understand.

This is the real cause of nervousness about appearing in public, when and if you know your subject and know that you are fully qualified to do the work on which you are set. The nervousness that attacks, say, an amateur actor, may be far more legitimate; he may be illy suited to the part he is to play, or he may know very well that he is not fitted to be an actor at all. The F. P. E., on the other hand, is like an actor who has talent for his work, who has been trained in it, and who has only to be himself to be making a good appearance.

The remedy for nervousness in his case is to learn to control that curious condition of the mind which produces the nervousness. The first thing is to be sure that the voice is quite natural. One of the tendencies of nervousness is to constrict the vocal chords, and this, making the throat feel tight and giving it a burning sensation, is alone enough to disturb any one. I know of nothing that will "open the throat," as it is called, so well as the taking of a few singing lessons. The control of the muscles of the throat can be gained easily, and will never thereafter be lost. I can speak of this from a personal standpoint, having, for years, suffered from this tightness of the throat, which often developed into actual sore throat without a visible cause. I took singing lessons for three months and entirely overcame this tendency, which is one wholly of the nerves.

Every effort should be made to seize the opportunity to talk about finger prints—or any other subject with which you are familiar—no matter if it is before only a handful of people. Do not try to be dramatic, and for Heaven's sake do not try to use any of the methods that you may have learned or heard of through "elocution." Use your natural voice with its natural inflections, and use the terms, words, and mode of speech that are yours ordinarily. Gestures there should be none, except such as are inevitable, as pointing to a photograph or marking out the points which you wish to emphasize.

Now then, with all this attended to, there remains the fact that you will often be "nervous," will hesitate, stammer, forget what you were about to say, and generally make, as you fear, a fool of yourself.

The remedy for this, as I have said, is wholly within your own mind. You must get out of your consciousness the thought of the persons around you. You must forget what your arms and legs and hands are doing. If you have given yourself the training that you ought to, they will be behaving all right. Forget them. Try to breathe naturally and to keep the current of your mind in its accustomed channels. To enter the courtroom and be sworn and take the witness chair and to state quietly, while in it, what you know so well, and that about a subject with which you and no other person in the room is thoroughly familiar, is something that should not be so trying on your nerves as the critical moment when you begin to develop a difficult print and wonder

how it is going to come out. You are the principal figure at that moment; you are in charge of the situation.

It is said that the Prince of Wales is always calm, always serene, no matter where he is. No wonder. He is the compelling force, the center of the business of the moment. It is he who sets the pace. Well, when you, as a finger-print expert, appear in court, you are also the center of the business of the moment, and it is you who are in command of it. Therefore, be at your ease; walk calmly to the place beside the judge, where a court attendant will hand you a Bible and ask you to take the oath on it that you will speak the truth. You need not be nervous about knowing what to do. The attendant will show you where to stand and tell you what to say. Then he will indicate the witness chair, and you will seat yourself in it.

As a well-bred man, you will not loll in the chair nor cross one foot over the other and rock it nor sprawl nor do anything that would be unbecoming to you; but, on the other hand, you will not grip the arms of the chair, press your feet grimly to the floor, perspire, cough, and generally give a good imitation of a man about to be tried for his life. You will speak clearly, answering the questions that will be put to you, remembering that you are there by the will of the court, and that you will be helped by all concerned to do your work without worry and without fuss.

But, most of all, keep out of your mind that curious double consciousness of being a critical bystander. I have talked with a great many persons who have been attacked with this peculiar nervousness, and what they tell me and what I know of it myself from the lecture platform is about like this: You feel that your right hand is awkwardly placed. You shift it and discover that it is even more awkward. You feel that you are holding your head too stiffly and, in trying to move it, are led to wonder whether you do not look like a chicken pecking at something. You decide that your right foot is too far forward and move it back, only to hit the round of the chair and push the foot out again, thus producing a shuffling movement that quite disconcerts you.

All this is perfectly needless. You can control such nervous reactions by performing that mental stunt to which I referred in the first place—the stunt of "handling" your own mental processes. We can all do this, although we do not always know that we can nor that we do; but every one of us knows what it is to stop, by an exercise of will, the mental stampede in which we needlessly worry, or in which we get into a panic. I will continue this subject in another article, hoping that, so far, those who have been interested enough to read have gained some profit.

ANSWER TO A READER'S QUERY

FRENCHY.—I really do not know what to say about an ex-criminal, and one, moreover, who is known to the police of several countries, taking up the finger-print profession. On the other hand, some of the best-known detectives have profited by association, acknowledged or otherwise, with men who had been criminals. If you show that you were really on the right road, the knowledge that you have of international criminals might be of great value in conjunction with your work as a finger-print expert. Write to some of the schools which teach this science and see what they say to you. Be as frank as you have been with me.

The How, When, and Where of Success

Conducted by RUTHERFORD SCOTT

If it is impossible for you to wait for Mr. Scott to touch upon the work in which you are especially interested, in one of his articles, send a stamped, addressed envelope, and a careful, accurate, and brief statement of what your education is, what your experience has been, and where you wish to begin your career; also, the amount of time and money which you can give to your apprenticeship. He will write you a personal letter, and tell you what you wish to know.

The Hotel Employee

THERE is, I am told by a number of important hotel owners and managers with whom I have talked and corresponded recently, a growing tendency on their part to get away from the old solidarity by which all hotel employees were part of what might be called a closely packed system. That is to say, up to a few years ago the employees of practically all the hotels in the country were furnished by certain employment agencies, usually run by foreigners distinctly alien to the feeling and the personality of the United States. Any person applying for hotel positions was obliged to pass through the hands of these agencies, who always favored the seasoned, blasé, and acquisitive hotel employee from Europe.

The result was that our hotels were slaves to the tipping system, and that that individuality which it is the pride of America to foster in all departments of work and effort, was all but sunk. This was so true that even the food offered us was of the European variety invariably. Such a thing as an honest fried chicken, Maryland style, or creamed oysters as they do them in Virginia, or a Cape Cod fish chowder, could positively not be procured, though you were a millionaire, in any hotel on this ground, where such things are part of the tradition of our very national existence.

There has been a change creeping into all this of late years, especially since the war. People discovered the doughnut and the deep pie, and the "ham and eggs" that are as American as Bunker Hill. With all this there has been a change in the employing of hotel help, and there is now an opportunity for any one with real hotel experience or even with the desire to acquire it, to get into the field.

There are still European employment agencies, and they still favor the imported article. By that path there is not much hope for the American. But, as I have said, managers and owners are taking a new view of things. One of the straws which show which way the hotel wind is blowing is the steadily increasing use of American women of charm and distinction and capability for hotel "hostesses," something entirely unknown in Europe, and for housekeepers, that term often covering work which comes very near to being managerial.

I do not believe that these higher positions can be reached by American women through the usual channel of the hotel agency. There she will be met with veiled if not active antagonism. The road is a more devious one. Let her find work in, say, a humble hotel and stay there for a time until she can move on to one a little better. By this route she can arrive, in about four years, at a good-sized hotel, and, once she is employed there, she can slip into better and better places without reference to the usual lines of the agencies. It is to be remembered that, whether as linen-room keeper, manager, hostess, or housekeeper, there is room and board, and usually washing and all other expenses, as well as a salary, included in this sort of work, so that, while the process is slow and tedious, there is seldom the problem of supplying the living expenses, as there is in many another line of work.

Hotels, as I have said, are coming more and more to look to the native

American for the higher type of help, but the fact remains that most of the hotel help is hired through what may be called underground channels—that is to say, although the manager may be a man of wide sympathies and may think that he is acting entirely on his own volition, he is usually taking the employees who have been insidiously suggested to him. Naturally, this is a thing that all the responsible heads of hotels will deny, but it would be wrong for me, in such a candid discussion as is always aimed at in this department, to evade the presentation of such facts.

On the other hand, this vicious condition can be handled in the way I have mentioned, which is that of the long way around; for the smaller hotels, never being able to pay as much as the positions really should carry, will always take any one who seems to have some ability, and from that point it is a case of getting from one position to another.

Last year I wrote an article in which I discussed the wages paid in this line of work; those wages are to-day somewhat lower for some of the positions and somewhat higher for others. There seems to have been a slump in the extravagant wages and the undue publicity given to "hotel hostesses" in return for their rather nebulous duties, and a raising of the standard of wage for housekeepers, linen-room keepers, and cooks of all degrees, save those who are of the rather diminishing "foreign chef" variety; also there has been a seeping in of more and more Americans who bring with them the older standards of the American hotel, with its good but plain service and its food that is indigenous.

A new chain of hotels, taking in many of the larger cities of the country, has just been opened with the avowed intention of catering more nearly to the standards of American life. A very large hotel opened a few weeks ago in Montreal in which there was a conscientious effort to take the staff from as near at home as possible. The South seems to be having a boom in hotels, and all over the country there are innumerable new inns, tearooms, and small, country hotels springing up, in which there would be opportunities for the untrained persons to break in.

I am bound to confess that I do not believe that the opportunities for men are as good as they are for women, from this standpoint of the getting into the business from the outside. On the other hand, the supercilious and bad-tempered clerk, with whom we were too familiar for so long, has given place to a more coldly correct and business-like young man who, while better bred than his predecessor, is even less human in his manner. I should say that the well-educated young man who was at least a fairly good bookkeeper, and who had a pleasant and tactful manner, with the secret possession of a big lump of discretion, might do a great deal worse than to aspire to this line of work.

Many women cooks are gradually getting into the hotel kitchens, but there is still the demand for the man cook, and, unjust as the fact is, it must be stated that no woman cook at present can hope to receive a salary of one third as much as a man cook, no matter how good she may be. At the same time, I would consider that many a woman who was obliged to turn to a means of livelihood might do a great deal worse than to try the hotel kitchen, with the skill that she had acquired in her own. The salary would vary, of course.

The Middle West, strangely enough, does not seem so good or encouraging a field for the native-born American in the hotel business as the South and the Atlantic coast.

There are numbers of magazines devoted to the interests of the hotel busi-

ness, and it would pay a person who has this line of work in mind, to read these. I will be glad to send the names of such magazines and papers to any who inquire.

Also, there are hotel agencies who are less unsympathetic than others toward the newer type of person who is being drawn to the hotel business, but, as a general thing, it is better to seek to deal direct with the hotel manager or owner.

Young women of charm and tact, careful, discreet, and self-sufficient, should investigate the position of floor clerk, which is to be had from the large hotels. They are required to sit at a desk, ostensibly to be at the service of any one on their floor, but their duties are many, and what they are asked to know about is that which constitutes them the real detective force of the establishment. The salary is at least fair, and a number of other confidential positions can be worked into by the ones who make good in this one.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

OPENING INSTALLMENT OF

The Sixth Director

One goes into exile; five remain and reap a harvest, then sow a whirlwind.

By DOUGLAS NEWTON

For a Lady in Distress

A playwright and a detective join forces to outwit a gang of clever crooks who offer a district attorney a choice between his honor and the life of his daughter.

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

The Elusive Greezaire

A man from Mexico sets the stage for his own murder. The place is Paris, and the actors are painters, policemen, and a woman.

By OSCAR SCHISGALL

And Other Stories ***Be Sure to Order Your Copy in Advance***

UNDER THE LAMP

CONDUCTED BY HENRY A. KELLER

Involved Transposition

IN looking through the scrapbook of the late Inspector Steele, veteran cipher expert, I am always amazed. My amazement is born of the thought that, for all the hundreds and hundreds of samples of ciphers which the scrapbook contains, each one is different in some particular from any of the others, yet there are only two basic classifications into which they can be placed. A cipher, or system of secret writing, is either a substitution or a transposition arrangement; in other words, a text such as "I will be there," is enciphered either as 9 23 9 12 12 2 5 20 8 5 18 5, or as I L E E W L T R I B H E. In whatever manner this text is complicated to keep it from prying eyes, the complications beyond the examples just given, must be an elaboration of those examples. And the great number of these variations in the inspector's scrapbook is staggering.

The cipher I have selected to give you as this week's mental treat is of the transposition class; that is to say, its text, or the message that was transcribed into cryptic form, was transcribed by adding no letters, substituting no letters, signs, or figures, but simply by rearranging the letter sequence. Of course, the text letter in any transposition cipher are rearranged according to some fixed plan; otherwise, there would be no way for the person to whom the cipher was sent, to retranscribe it back into its original form.

Those of you who have sat with me under the lamp on previous occasions, are already familiar with the fixed plan of most transposition ciphers—that is, of putting the text into some "geometric form." In the case of the transposition cipher above, the plan was three vertical columns and four horizontal; the cipher itself was copied from this "geometric form" from left to right, and from top to bottom. Look:

I L E E
W L T R
I B H E

Now the person to whom the cipher I L E E W L T R I B H E, as per above, would be sent, presumably knows, before he gets the cipher, how the letters in it are to be rearranged to make it yield its meaning. In the case of the cipher I have selected for you this week, the author had never sent one to its recipient before. Consequently, he made some provision for the recipient's lack of knowledge; he incorporated into the cipher itself, an adequate explanation of how to solve it.

The cipher was written by a crooked stockbroker on the eve of his get-away with about $60,000, which he had realized from the sale of stocks intrusted to him by clients who dealt on margin. It was sent to his secretary at his office. The broker, at his hotel, had already cashed in his stock, and the currency was with him. He was in constant fear of capture from the police, who, he felt sure, had had an eye on him for some time; in fact, ever since three of his clients took complaints about him to the district attorney's office. Now the broker had forgotten something which he thought of the utmost importance, and he felt it imperative to get some word to his secretary. To do so openly would be to give away his hiding place, should he be already under suspicion as an absconder; the only way, he thought, was to send his message in cipher to provide against its interception, and to send it in a sealed envelope

by messenger from his hotel. This he did, in the manner described above. Here is the cipher:

4 & 9 M L A O R R K D E S
2 & 5 T D I M M I E A T M 8 &
14 O I R S T U H P E W 7 & 12
D Y E T S H K E F M 1 & 13 I
O L R E A L L T L 6 & 15 I I O
T N H M M Y E 3 & 11 A E B S
L T E R S O 10 S A K E D

With the hint you already have, solution for you should be an easy matter; there's just enough mystery left about it, it seems to me, to give the cipher zest. Inspector Steele, whose scouts brought it to him before the broker got away, solved it in nine minutes, so his records say, and without knowing the first thing about it when he started. Go to it now, and see if you can find out what the broker wanted to let his secretary know. You will find the answer in next week's issue.

The solution to last week's cipher problem is: "A lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright; but a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight." The system by which it was enciphered, allowed two substitutes for most of the letters of the alphabet. Here it is:

A	1	5		F	6	10		K	11	15		P	16	20		U	21	25		Z	26	26
B	2	4		G	7	9		L	12	14		Q	17	19		V	22	24				
C	3	3		H	8	8		M	13	13		R	18	18		W	23	23				
D	4	2		I	9	7		N	14	12		S	19	17		X	24	22				
E	5	1		J	10	6		O	15	11		T	20	16		Y	25	21				

INCREASE IN PRISON POPULATION LAID TO DRYS

ACCORDING to figures compiled recently by the census bureau, the prison population of the United States is increasing. The cause for the increase is attributed by W. H. Stayton, head of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, to prohibition and the increased arrests for causes arising from dry enforcement. Figures were offered, purporting to show that on July 1, 1922, there were 163,889 persons awaiting trial and serving sentences, including road and chain gangs and women committed to religious and charitable institutions, or held as witnesses. Excluding the road and chain gangs and the women, there were on July 1, 1917, only 140,186 in jail, as opposed to 150,131 for this year.

TELEPHONE CALL PREVENTS SUICIDE

THE promptness with which Ralph Seaman, a resident of Rochester, New York, recently made a long-distance telephone call to Chicago saved his mother from a suicide's grave. Mrs. Seaman, who was despondent, wrote her son a special-delivery letter in which she said that, by the time the letter was received, she would be dead. The son immediately telephoned to a physician in Chicago, who, with the aid of the police, broke down the door of the woman's apartment. They found her unconscious from gas poisoning, but were in time to revive her. Physicians at the hospital to which she was removed said that she would recover.

MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

ATTENTION.—Information is wanted in regard to parents or relatives who left a girl baby about fourteen months old, or thereabouts, in some section of Canal Street, New York City, in 1907. She had blond hair and hazel eyes, and has a picture that was taken four months after she was found. It is believed that her name was Helen Gilmer. Any information that would help to find relatives, or any one having knowledge of them, would be most gratefully received and appreciated. R. S., care of this magazine.

SPIDELL, HOMER ROBERTS.—When last heard from he was in Piedras Negras, Mexico. He is about five feet nine inches tall, with dark hair and eyes. He is asked to write to his sister Myrtle, who will be glad to hear from any one who can give her news of her brother. In care of this magazine.

DAVIS.—My name was Clifford Davis. I was born in Durango, Colorado, June 18, 1904, and was adopted by a family named Synnot in Ouray, that State, fourteen months later. Any information as to the whereabouts of my parents or relatives will be greatly appreciated. Clifford Synnot, care of this magazine.

DOAK, SAMUEL.—He was last heard of in Toronto, Canada, in 1920. His sister would be very happy to get news of him and will be glad to hear from any one who can tell her where he is. She hopes he will see this, or be told of it, and will write to her without delay. Mrs. B. R., care of this magazine.

COE.—Some thirty-nine years ago a John Coe lived in Henry County, Illinois, and went to Iowa with a man named John Berg. It is thought that Coe might have been born in England, near Hull. He said he had relatives named Phineas, Ira, and Alden Bennett, who lived at Galva, Illinois, and one who lived in New York City. Any information about these people, or of any relatives of John Coe, will be greatly appreciated by Mrs. John Briggs, 290 East Seventeenth Street, Des Moines, Iowa.

SLAVIN, JOHN ANTHONY.—He left his home in Toledo in March, 1919, and has not been heard of since. He is also known as Spike Kelley in the athletic world. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a favor by writing to his brother, who hopes he will see this and write home at once. William J. Slavin, 3145 Chase Street, Toledo, Ohio.

COVE, A. J., formerly with the U. S. army, and the mechanical division, Panama Canal, is asked to drop a line right away to James F. Devine, Box 265, Balboa, Canal Zone.

SPENCER, F. H.—When last heard from he was in Hot Springs, Arkansas, with his sister, Mrs. John Jackson. He is sixty-five years of age, six feet tall, with blue eyes, light complexion, and has a slight limp in the right foot. His right hand is partly paralyzed. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a great favor by communicating with his son, G. A. Spencer, 2028 Clay Street, Fresno, California.

MONAGHAN, JOHN and BRIDGET, who left their home at Carnin, Ballyjames, Duff, County Cavan, Ireland, about twenty-four years ago for New York, or their children if they have any, are asked to write to their aunt Mary Monaghan, who would be very happy to hear from any of them. She is now Mrs. M. Rabone, 78 Brown Street, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

LARKINS, ETHEL.—She is about nineteen years old, and was last heard of in Kansas City, Missouri, in September, 1922. A friend would be glad to hear from her, or from any one who knows her address. N. Wilkins, Box 175, Baldwin City, Kansas.

ULDRICH, WILLIE.—He was last heard from at Weatherford, Texas, in February, 1922. He is twenty-one years old, six feet tall, well built, of fair complexion, with blue eyes and yellow hair. His aged father lives all alone and is in poor health, and would be very happy if he could hear from his son. Any one who can give information about him will do a great kindness by writing to K. C. Uldrich, Zena, Oklahoma.

COOK, E. P.—He was last seen in El Paso, Texas, in 1914. He was born in Stockbridge, Georgia. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by James T. Saunders, P. O. Box 282, Payette, Idaho.

FARR, MARY ALENA, last heard of in Constantinople, and **EDNA VORIS BUSHNELL**, last heard of in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Any one who knows their whereabouts please notify Alberta Beman Norberg, 1017 Fayette Street, Los Angeles, California.

SPITZ.—Your mother is living and well, and would like to hear from you. Your oldest brother is married, but the young one is still single. Your mother, Rose.

BAXTER.—Some people of this name came from Nova Scotia to Lynn, Massachusetts, some years ago, and their daughter would be glad to get news of them, or of any relatives of this name. Her father had a wooden leg. Her mother died when she was quite young, and her father later married a woman named Phillips. There were several half-brothers and sisters. One of the aunts in Lynn married a man named Samburn. Word from any of them would be appreciated. C. B. B. C., care of this magazine.

LA RUE, JOE, sometimes known as J. L. Smith. He was last seen in Los Angeles in 1917, and was then going to Canada, somewhere near the Lachine locks. An old pal is anxious to find him and will appreciate any helpful information. W. E. Barry, care of this magazine.

LOGIE, ERNEST.—He is tall, and about fifty years of age. About 1895 he married a girl named Florence Goring. Their daughter, Florence Viola, was born in North Tonawanda, New York, in 1896. Other children were born later, but all died in infancy. Any information about her father would be most gratefully received by Florence Viola, care of this magazine.

R. MEX.—Please write to your wife at 4936 North Western Avenue, care of N. P. Schuler. She is very anxious to hear from you. Ellen.

PECKHAN, W. L.—When last heard of he was in New York. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by Robert Gildersleeve, 215 Lloyd Street, New Haven, Connecticut.

WEST, MRS. W. W.—In 1921 she lived on West Twenty-eighth Street, New York City, and later in Newark, New Jersey. She is asked to write to J. J. S., care of this magazine.

ATTENTION.—Members of One Hundred and Forty-ninth Company, in the Virgin Islands from July, 1918, to April, 1919, are asked to write to an old pal, Ed Overton, Awker, Dean, please write. Frank A. Berry, Conrad, Montana.

B. E.—Daddy, please forgive all. I am discouraged and am lost without you. Have tried to reach you but failed. Write to me in care of this magazine. B. E.

RITCHIE, CHARLES W.—He has been missing since May 11, 1922. He is five feet six inches tall, with dark-brown hair, rather thin, left front tooth partly gone, gray eyes, long narrow head, sharp features, and weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. His left leg has been broken, which gives him the appearance of being bow-legged. He is of Scotch descent, is a machine designer, and had worked on the big tabulating and sorting machines for the government, and for the Prudential and Metropolitan Insurance Companies. Latterly he had been engaged in making and installing radio machines. His relatives say they will pay a reward of two hundred dollars for positive information as to his whereabouts. Mrs. Grace Reed Ritchie, care of this magazine.

GUS K.—Write to me at once and send address. Ethel H. K.

SHAW, ET, and RED.—Wrote you at Harlingen. Letter returned. Please write to your old pals, Ed. and Tulip, 338 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley, California.

MANGUN, HORACE.—He was last heard of in 1920. His home is believed to be in Rome, Georgia. He is asked to write to his old friend, H. B., 10 Jefferson Avenue, Endicott, New York.

ADAMS, LETHA, MYRTLE, and LYDIA, whose childhood home was in Iowa. Their sister is very anxious to hear from them and will greatly appreciate any information as to their whereabouts. Mrs. Flora Webb, care of this magazine.

MALONE, HENRY.—He is forty-four years old, about five feet five inches in height, with dark eyes and gray hair, and has a scar on the left side of his nose from the tip to the eyes. There is important news for him, and any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his wife. He is a cook. Mrs. Henry Malone, 920 North Fifth Street, Superior, Wisconsin.

SIMMS.—My mother, whose maiden name was Mary Simms, left me when I was six years old with a Mrs. Polly Hansbury in Washington, D. C., keeping my young brother, Eugene, with her. She went to Philadelphia. Later she married again and her second husband's name was John Perkins. I am now thirty-three years old and have never heard of my brother or mother since that time, and should be happy to get any information that would help me to get in touch with them. Josephine Hansbury, care of this magazine.

QUAIN, NORMAN. CHESTER, and PHILIP.—An old friend, who has not seen them since 1917, when he left Ashland, Oregon, to enlist in the service would like to get in touch with them, and hopes they will see this and write to him. Allen C. Collins, 1065 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, California.

HAND, J. S., who was last heard of in Boston, Massachusetts. His mother is dead, and he is needed in the settlement of the estate. He might be known as B. G. Stratton. Please write to R. V. Hand, Box 204, Sour Lake, Texas.

MUELLER, RUDOLPH W.—We received your letter, but please send us your address, so that we may write to you. You are forgiven and will be welcome home any time you may wish to come. We are hoping to hear from you, or to see you soon. Paula.

PLATH, WILLIAM and RICHARD.—About fifteen years ago my father, William Plath, took me to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, leaving my brother, Richard, who was then about one year old, in Chicago, and I have not heard from either my father or brother since that time. I should be very grateful to any one who could help me to find them. Walter F. Plath, care of this magazine.

McGOVERN, JAMES and JOSEPH.—They left Marshall, Michigan, about 1873, with their brother, Will, who died in Denver, Colorado, fifteen years ago. The last heard of Jim and Joe was from around Fargo, North Dakota, and it is thought that they went West from there. Any information will be greatly appreciated by their nephew, Frank J. McGovern, 161 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, New York.

MASON, JOHN L., whose wife's name is Lula. He has moved about a good deal, and it was heard that he had lived at St. Rose, Louisiana, and other places in that State. His mother has been very ill. Two of his brothers have died, and she is very anxious to hear from her absent son, who is asked to write to her as soon as possible. Mrs. Maggie Mason, 4 North Olympia Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

H. M.—Remember the storm house in Mississippi. Please write to me in care of this magazine, and let me know where you are. Jim.

COOKE, JAMES.—He was last heard of in Huntington, West Virginia, in 1905. He is about forty years of age, five feet seven inches tall, and has brown eyes. Any information about him will be gratefully received by his son, J. C. Cooke, P. O. Box 48, Chapmanville, West Virginia.

MILLER, BILLY.—Come for me right away. I need you. Ruth Miller.

FRIENDS.—Please address all letters to Peter Salesman, General Delivery, Grand Forks, North Dakota. Ernest K. Moorehouse.

HUMPHREY.—I have three brothers and two sisters, and I do not know where they are. Their names are Chester M., Paul T., and Elie W. My sister's names are Elley M. and Myrtle C. Any one who knows their whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to me in care of this magazine. Louis L. Humphrey.

MILLER, JAMES, who may be known as Jim Smith. He is about fourteen years of age, with brown hair and eyes. He is asked to write to his sister, who will be glad to hear from any one who knows where he is. Mamie Miller, care of this magazine.

HOOK, LAMAR, formerly of Augusta, Georgia, and last heard of in Frisco. His old pal, also of Augusta, and who was with him later in Prescott, Arizona, has made a lucky strike, and would like to have him join with him at once. He has a fine ranch in Arizona. Lige, care of this magazine.

McMANIS, WILLIAM E., who was last heard of in Manhattan, Kansas. There were four boys, Harold, Donald, Clair, and Kenneth, and two girls, Mrs. Grace Copeland and Mrs. Otto Bung. An old friend is anxious to hear from them and will gratefully appreciate any helpful information. J. E. L., care of this magazine.

KERRIGAN, JOSEPH.—He was last seen in Buffalo over fifteen years ago. His brother is very anxious to find him and will be very thankful for any information as to his whereabouts. Cyril Kerrigan, 410 Third Avenue, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

LANNAN, JAMES W., who left Lowell in 1889, and was last heard of in southern California, is asked to send his address to William Lannan, care of this magazine.

CURRY, JAMES.—He left home before the war and was last heard of in New Castle, Pennsylvania. He is thirty-four years old, of heavy build and medium height. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a favor by writing to his mother, Mrs. Frances Flecher, care of this magazine.

JACK.—Am sorry. Please write and let me know where you are. Am not working. Mike, 318 Dosmon Street, Sayre, Pennsylvania.

CLAYTON, JAMES H.—He is about fifty-eight years of age, five feet six inches tall, and formerly lived in Louisville, Kentucky. He was always working on inventions. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his friend, Edward M. Davis, 3864 Folsom Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

THACKER, MYRTLE and ELECANDER.—She is about eighteen years old, and when last heard of was in Richmond, Virginia, and he was in the army at Camp Meade, Maryland. Any one who knows their present address will do a favor by writing to Box 25, Fort Howard, Maryland.

CLANCY, LEO FRANCIS.—He ran away from Aquinas College, Columbus, Ohio, on March 7, 1919. His mother is worrying herself to death about him. All is forgiven and she begs him to come home. Any one who can give news of him please write to Celia Vorhees Milligan, 539 Mithoff Street, Columbus, Ohio.

MILLS, RAY.—He served on the U. S. S. "Glen White" during the war in 1917. An old friend would be glad to hear from him. E. K., care of this magazine.

THOMAS, FRANK J.—He is about forty-three years of age, and was last heard from about three years ago at Wirt, Oklahoma. He has worked in oil fields of the Middle West for several years. He has a son, Victor, twenty-two years old. Any information regarding the whereabouts of either would be very much appreciated by Frank's only brother, Floyd W. Thomas, care of this magazine.

HANARD, FREDERICK H.—Please write me at Wellman, Iowa. Everything is O. K. Your friend. Ernest L. Belen.

HOLLIS, ALBERT.—He was last heard from in 1911, when he was cook on a ranch in Red Crow Agency, Montana. He is about five feet four inches tall, weighs about one hundred and forty pounds, and has medium brown hair and wears a mustache. His wife's name is Daisy. His folks have important news for him and will appreciate any information that will help to find him. Please write to his nephew, Bert E. Hollis, Sullivan, Illinois.

BRUNT, GERTRUDE.—She came from England on the S. S. "Oceanic," and arrived in New York on April 19, 1906. From there she went to Charlottesville, Virginia. Letters sent to her there have been returned. Any one who knows her present address please write to C., care of this magazine.

CHAPMAN, WILLIAM HENRY, who went West in 1849 and settled in Marysville, California, and became an alderman in 1852. Any information regarding him will be greatly appreciated by Alfred T. Weeker, 747 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, New York.

KAMPE, WILLIAM F., PHILIP G., and their sisters, **AMELIA GREEN** and **KATE MILLERSHIPE.** They were all living in Brooklyn, New York, about thirty years ago. Their brother George was put in the New York Juvenile Asylum in 1892, was sent West from there, and that is the last he had heard of his sisters and brothers. His brothers and the husband of Mrs. Amelia Green are all railroad men. Any news of them would be gladly received by Mr. and Mrs. George P. Kampe, care of this magazine.

ALEXANDER, WILLIAM LOGAN.—He is twenty years old, five feet eleven inches tall, with brown eyes and hair, and has peculiar teeth, the upper ones seeming like a double set, one grown out of the other. He was last seen in Ipswich, Massachusetts, in July, 1922. There is no reason whatever for his disappearance, and his folks are very anxious to hear from him, as they have moved from their former home. His brother hopes he will see this and write without delay, and will be grateful for any information. John Alexander, care of this magazine.

BECHER, EDWARD.—Please write home to mother. She is under a terrible strain. At least let her know that you are all right. Mortie.

WEILER, WALTER.—He was sent West to some place in Nebraska from New York in 1912-13. He is now nineteen years old. His sister Anna is very anxious to get information as to his whereabouts and will be grateful for any information that will help her to communicate with him. Mrs. S. L. Staples, 306 Sumner Street, Akron, Ohio, care of Ferguson.

WHALEY, MAY ELLEN.—When she was seven years old she was taken by a Mrs. Flora Woods, of Titusville, Pennsylvania, with whom she stayed until she was sixteen, and was known by the name of May Ellen Woods. Then she was taken by a Mrs. Richel, of Warren, same State, and was known as Marion Richel. It is not known how long she remained there, but when last heard of she was in Pittsburgh. She is now twenty-one. When she was small she had brown eyes and dark-brown hair. Her mother, who has not seen her since she was seven years old, is very anxious to find her, and would be glad to hear from her, or from any one who can give her news of her. Mrs. William Arahood, R. F. D. 2, Austin, Ohio.

DE GROSS, WALTER E., who left Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1898-99, and has not been heard from since, is asked to write to his old friend. Also, **WILLIAM M. LAWRENCE**, who was last heard from at Ucluelet, a small place in Vancouver Island, B. C., in October, 1907, when he wrote that he was going to start in the following spring, through forest and over mountain, about sixty miles inland, in search of placer gold. Any information concerning these two friends would be gladly welcomed by George V. Hamlin, 29 City Avenue, New Britain Connecticut.

NORTH, EDGAR MILTON.—He was last heard of in July, 1920, when he was seventeen years old. His mother, who is a widow, does not know whether he is dead or alive, and hopes that some kind reader may be able to give her news of her boy. He has light hair and blue eyes, was about five feet in height when he left home, and has an Indian tattooed on one arm. His mother begs him to write to her, and will be most grateful to any one who can help her to know where he is. Mrs. Carrie North, care of this magazine.

RICE, KENNETH.—Please send your address to this magazine. We are holding a letter here for you.

DURANT, ALBERT EDWARD CRASTON.—He was sent to Canada sixteen years ago and the last letter received from him was from Verdun, Montreal, twelve years ago, since which time all trace of him has been lost. He changed his name to Tom Belanger, and may be known by that name. His sister, who has been in Canada two years, is very anxious to find him, and will be glad to hear from any one who can give her news of her brother, Katie Durant, care of this magazine.

LIBBY, LUCILLE, who was in Twin Falls, Idaho, in 1908 or 1909, is asked to write to Cloyshus, care of this magazine.

LUNT, RALPH, formerly of Chicago, a friend from Superior, Wisconsin, would like to hear from him. M., care of this magazine.

CARTER, MYRTLE and ROY.—They were last heard of in 1912 at Fort Smith, Arkansas. Roy is now about twenty-two, and his sister is a few years younger. Any information about them will be gladly received by William L. Boyd, 307 West Fifteenth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

CALDWELL, FRANK W.—Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a very great favor by writing to his wife, Mrs. Frank W. Caldwell, Quinnimont, West Virginia.

CLIFFERT, MRS. ANNA.—Her brother has not heard from her for over twenty years, and as she is the only living relative he has, he would be very happy if he could find her. When last heard from she was in La Veta, Colorado, and it is thought that she is now in Portland, Oregon. Information as to her address will be gratefully received. Owen Frank Lynch, care of this magazine.

NEILSEN, KARL, known as "Swede," who was last heard of in Harlan County, Kentucky, where he worked in the coal mines in 1921. His old pal, who was with him there, and who has been searching for him ever since, would be glad to get information in regard to him. Edward Phelan, Crown, West Virginia.

BEAL.—My father, John T. Beal, married in Texas between 1880 and 1890. My mother died when I was a baby, and he moved to Wichita, Kansas, where he died, and I was sent to Scottsville, Virginia, to his father, Joe Beal. I was six years old when my father died, and am now thirty-nine. He was a harness maker and had a shop in Wichita. He got into a dispute with the town marshal one Saturday night in a barroom, and shots were exchanged, the marshal wounding my father so that he died on the Monday following. I don't know my mother's maiden name, but I think her first name was Jennie. If any of her relatives are alive I would like to hear from them, and shall be grateful for any information that would help me to find them. John T. Beal, care of this magazine.

HENDRICKSON, AL., who is a tree surgeon and lives near Boston, Massachusetts, is asked to send his address to Charles Brummer, care of this magazine, who will be glad to hear from any one who can give his exact address, or the place where he was last heard of.

CLONTZ, CHARLES E., formerly of Camp Lewis, Washington, please send your present address to Harvey E. Wolf, 612 East Wood Street, Waseca, Minnesota.

JONES.—My parents were Anna Butler and Isaac Wegley Jones. My brothers are Fred, Hampton, Harley, and Sylvester. We were placed in an orphan asylum in St. Louis, Missouri, when I was about four years old, all but Sylvester, who stayed with father. Fred served in the late war. I was in the asylum about six months, when I was adopted by Mr. B. W. Roe, who gave me the name of Herbert Roe. After eight years he died, and I have been doing for myself since that time. I have never heard from any of my relatives, and would be very grateful for any information that would help me to find my people. Carl Jones, care of this magazine.

BANTZ, JACOB.—He was a harness maker in Memphis, Tennessee, and was last heard from at Helena, Arkansas, in 1911. His daughter will greatly appreciate any information as to his present whereabouts. Miss Virgil D. Bantz, P. O. Box 825, Port Arthur, Texas.

BECHER, EDWARD.—Please write home to mother. She is under a terrible strain. At least let her know that you are all right.—Mortie.

WOGAMAN, JOHN DENTON, who left Australia in October, 1894, and was last heard from in New York in 1895. He would be now about seventy years of age. He has a long scar on one cheek. His wife and children would be glad to hear from him, and will thankfully appreciate any information about him. Mrs. L. M. Wogaman, care of this magazine.

BOB R.—Please write me pronto, regardless where you are, at 1134. No hard feelings.—Ed.

LUCAS, GLADYS.—Please send your address to Miss E. Lucas, 1821 First Avenue South, Apartment 26, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

BILL TO BILL.—Cannot keep the children much longer. Will have to be put in home. R. gone home. Please advise what to do.

PRINCE.—The folks at 49 would like to hear from you.—Mother.

T. E. S.—My father's name is Herbert Steven. My brother, Chester Steven, died December 10, 1918. My name is Lester Steven, twenty-five years of age on January 15, 1923. My present address is Ray L. Steven, General Delivery, Portland, Oregon.

STOVALL, VIRGINIA, who came from Waco, Texas, and was last heard from one year ago in Joliet, Illinois. Any one who knows her present address will do a favor by writing to V. L. M., care of this magazine.

NORMAN, ARTHUR F.—He is forty-four years of age, five feet five inches in height, with brown hair and eyes, walks with a decided limp, and wears shell-rimmed eyeglasses. He was last seen in Davenport, Iowa, about April 10, 1922. Any information that will help to know his whereabouts will be gratefully received by Carl Norman, Box 288, Keithsburg, Illinois.

YOUNG, PHILIP, who was last heard of in Wausau, is asked to write to his old friend, Walter Ahrens, Route 6, Wausau, Wisconsin.

RIGGS, ALBERT.—He was adopted in Boise, Idaho, to a Mr. Paul Wilder, who changed his name to Bertie Wilder. He had light hair and blue eyes at that time. He is now around twenty years old. Mr. Wilder left Boise with him and it is not known where he went. His mother, two sisters, and a brother would be very happy if they could get news of him. Please write to Mrs. Ollie West, 725 East Jefferson Street, Boise, Idaho.

BERG, HUGO.—He was born in Wasa, Finland, and is about forty years of age. He has not been heard from for twelve years. He has two sisters and three brothers, all of whom would be very happy to get news of him, and will greatly appreciate any information about him. Charles A. Berg, Skamokawa, Washington.

WILKE, ROSE.—Her son, who is now twenty-four years old and is a sailor, has not seen his mother for twenty years, and would be very happy if he could find her. He hopes she will see this, or that some one will tell her that he is looking for her, and that she will write to him soon. Any information that will help to find her will be most gratefully received. Ernest Wilke, care of this magazine.

BRADSHAW, BERT.—He was last heard of near Fort Smith, Arkansas, on December 11, 1904. He is about five feet ten inches tall, had light-brown hair and a sandy complexion. His son would gratefully appreciate any information that would help him to know his whereabouts. S. J. Bradshaw, care of this magazine.

FOSTER, FERN.—She was last heard of in St. Paul, Minnesota, seven years ago. Her mother married a man named Dan E. Shortell, and it is believed that Fern might be with her. Her brother, Clayton, is in serious trouble and would like to hear from his sister. Any helpful information will be thankfully received by Mrs. Clayton C. Foster, care of this magazine.

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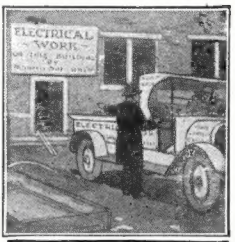

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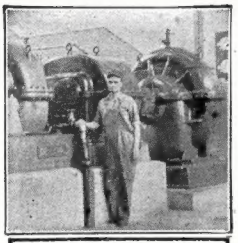

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